THE LAMP and the LAMPSTAND

K. P. S. MENON

LETTER FROM MOSCOW FROM RABINDRANATH TAGORE

20 September 1930

In Russia at last! Whichever way I look, I am filled with wonder. It is unlike any other country. It is radically different. From top to bottom they are rousing everybody up without distinction.

Throughout the ages, civilised communities have contained groups of nameless people. They are the majority—the beasts of burden, who have no time to become men. They grow up on the leavings of society's wealth, with the least food, least clothes and least education, and they serve the rest. They toil most, yet theirs is the largest measure of indignity. At the least excuse they starve and are humiliated by their superiors. They are deprived of everything that makes life worth living. They are like a lampstand bearing the lamp of civilisation on their heads: people above receive light while they are smeared with the trickling oil.

From Letters from Russia by Rabindranath Tagore

THE LAMP and the LAMPSTAND

K. P. S. MENON

India's Ambassador at Moscow 1952-61

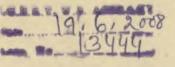


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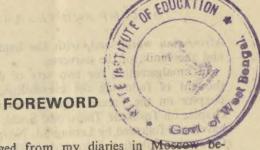
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This book has emerged from my diaries in Moscow between 1952 and 1961, or, rather, from the books which had already emerged from these diaries. Soon after I returned to India, two books were published, Russian Panorama and The Flying Troika. The former was a book of travel; the latter a political diary. I have now combined them into a

single book of reasonable dimensions - and price.

The last page of my Moscow diary was written almost exactly six years ago. Many of the principal protagonists who figured in the diary, Stalin and Dulles, Khrushchev and Kennedy, Churchill and Nehru, have left the stage. There have been many subsequent developments, some hopeful and some dismal: some, like the Tashkent conference of 1966, confirming the policy of peaceful coexistence, others, like the war in Vietnam, jeopardizing it, and all issuing, by way of fulfilment or nemesis, from the formative period covered by this book.

I have not attempted to rewrite the diaries in the light of after events. Indeed, on rereading them, I found how little there was to rewrite. Hardly anything has been added, except in the first chapter and a piece on Moscow Revisited in Part 2. Something has been subtracted, partly for reasons of space, partly because some stray reflections now seem hasty and trivial and partly because personalities figured a little too prominently in the original diaries. On the whole, the book remains the record of one man's reactions on the spot to the events of a memorable decade, memorable not merely in the annals of the USSR, but of the world, especially the

THE LAMP AND THE LAMPSTAND

Afro-Asian world, and, with the launching of the sputnik and the lunik, of the universe.

In amalgamating the two sets of diaries, I had at first thought of following the chronological order. Thus the chapter on the Freeze would have been followed by the chapter on Tashkent, Tbilisi and Sochi, and the Thaw would have been followed by Leningrad, Novgorod and Stalingrad. On further reflection, I decided to relegate the travel chapters to a separate part. The reason is that I did not want them to distract attention from the stately development of Soviet policy and the steady progress of peaceful coexistence through all the ups and downs in international relations during the last decade. Indeed, a fitting title for the book would have been 'The Rise and Decline of the Cold War'. Alas, not the Decline and Fall, because the cold war has received a fresh lease of life from the war in Vietnam and the aberrations of Chinese communism.

I hope this book will form a minor addition to the great stream of Soviet literature on the eve of the golden jubilee of the Great October Revolution.

K. P. S. M.

CONTENTS

Part 1

1	THE BACKGROUND	1
	First acquaintances - Wider contacts - I present credentials - Russia before the Revolution	
2	THE FREEZE	21
	The Nineteenth Congress - The Cold War spreads - Interview with Stalin - Stalin's death	
3	THE THAW	31
	*A change of heart ' - Peace in Korea - Internal relaxation - International relations - Ferment in literature - Soviet and Indian Art - Military aid and aesthetic barrage	
4	WAR AND PEACE	52
	Brinkmanship - On dogs and men - The eve of Dien Bien Phu - Lessons of Dien Bien Phu	
5	OF CREAT BEODIES?	60
	The USSR as seen by Nehru in 1927 - Nehru in Russia in 1955 - Nehru's talks with Soviet leaders - The Soviet leaders in India	
6	THE PROGRESS OF COEXISTENCE	73
	A Kremlin banquet - Cross-currents - Austria gains independence - The Summit Conference - Adenauer in Moscow	

THE LAMP AND THE LAMPSTAND

7	THE TWENTIETH CONGRESS	84
	Marxism modified - Stalin reassessed - Gandhiji recognized - The Sixth Five Year Plan - The Congress and coexistence	
8	A DOUBLE CRISIS	93
	The spreading thaw - Suez echoes - Revolution in Hungary	
9	THE DENOUEMENT	107
	Eden's exit - The Eisenhower doctrine - Dogmatism and revisionism - The sputnik	
10	STRAINS AND STRESSES	116
	Relations with Yugoslavia - China and the Cold War - Crisis in the Middle East - Calm after storm - Crisis in the Far East - The Berlin crisis - The Pasternak incident	
11	THE MARCH TO THE SUMMIT	128
	The Twenty-first Congress - The Seven Year Plan - The Emperor of Ethiopia - The German problem - The ice-breaker - The lunik hits the moon - The spirit of Camp David - The summit in sight	
12	RETREAT FROM THE SUMMIT	142
	The U-2 incident - The break-up of the summit conference - The vendetta against Eisenhower - The Sino-Soviet rift - Khrushchev at the UN - The Communist manifesto - The Ramayana in Moscow	
13	A FRESH WIND	158
	Kennedy becomes President - A vile deed - Hopeful signs - Flare-up in Laos - The cosmonaut - The Cuban crisis - The lamp and the lampstand	

CONTENTS

Part 2

1	IN AND AROUND MOSCOW	175
	The Lenin mausoleum - Zagorsk - The Bolshoi theatre- The Ballet school - Tolstoy's home - A Russian hospital - Moscow revisited	
2	UZBEKISTAN AND GEORGIA	204
	Tashkent - Samarkand - Tbilisi - Sochi	
3	LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD	221
	First glimpse of Novgorod - Churches and cathedrals - Icons and frescoes - The white nights - A tourist's paradise	
4	STALINGRAD	234
	Journey to Stalingrad - Mamai Hill - The Volga-Don Canal	
5	AZERBAIJAN	244
	A city of oil - India and Azerbaijan - Astrakhan	
6	THE UKRAINE, MOLDAVIA AND THE CRIMEA	252
	The house of Turgenev - The black earth and the wooded steppe - Kiev, past and present - Moldavia - Odessa - The Fountain of Bakhchisarai - Yalta - The road to Moscow	
7	DOWN THE VOLGA	273
	A Tartar Republic-The bow of Samara-The Utopia of electricians - The steppe	

	THE LAMP AND THE EATH OF THE	
8	SIBERIA	285
	The Trans-Siberian route-Irkutsk and Lake Baikal- The Buryat-Mongol ASSR - Across Siberia by air	
9	ARMENIA	298
	Journey to Yerevan - The Armenian tragedy - Soviet Armenia - Ancient Armenia	
10	AN ARCTIC PORT	309
	Murmansk - The Karelo-Finnish Republic	
11	A BALTIC STATE	315
	A city of churches - New Riga	
		321
12	SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA	341
	Kirghistan - Kazakhstan - Tajikstan - Turkmenistan	

INDEX

1 THE BACKGROUND

FIRST ACQUAINTANCES

IN 1952 a brave new world began to open out before my eyes, when I was posted as India's ambassador to the USSR. It was the fifth year of Indian independence. It was also

the third year after India became a Republic.

Independence did not come to India as dramatically as the end of the monarchy in France in 1789 or of capitalism in Russia in 1917. It came in stages. In September 1946, political power was transferred from British into Indian hands. Then the Indian National Congress abandoned its policy of non-co-operation with Great Britain, and Jawaharlal Nehru formed an interim National Government of India. But the old machinery remained, with the Viceroy at its apex. The King of England was still the head of the State in India; and it was in his name that the first Indian ambassadors went out to China, the USA and the USSR. My own credentials as India's first ambassador to China in 1947 were signed by King George VI and 'Counter-signed, by His Majesty's Command, Jawaharlal Nehru'.

At midnight on the 15th of August, 1947, India proclaimed herself independent, but she was still a Dominion; and the last British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, was invited to stay on as the first Governor-General of India. It was not till

1950 that India became a sovereign Republic.

The first general elections in India were held in 1952. The Indian National Congress which, under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, had fought for independence, was returned with an overwhelming majority in the Centre and the States. Jawaharlal Nehru became Prime Minister of

Dr Rajendra Prasad was elected President: and Dr Radhakrishnan, who had been Ambassador of India to the USSR since 1950, was called upon to be the Vice-President. At about that time, the headship of our embassy in Paris fell vacant

I was then about to complete my term as Foreign Secretary to the Government of India. One day, in May 1952, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, Secretary-General, asked me if I would like to go as Ambassador to France.

'No.' I exclaimed, 'not to France. The French are so conscious of their cultural superiority that they would look down upon anyone who could not speak French fluently.'

'The only other place vacant is Moscow,' said Bajpai

glumly.

'I do not mind going there,' I said. Bajpai was astonished.

It was as if I had offered to go to the Andamans!

A couple of days later Jawaharlal Nehru strolled into my room in the Foreign Office and told me in the most casual manner that he was thinking of appointing me as ambas-

sador to the USSR. I said I would be glad to go.

I was excited at the prospect of going to Moscow. At the same time I reflected how little I knew about the Soviet Union. As a student of European history at Oxford, I had learnt that Russia was a bugbear to Britain. Throughout the 19th century, one of the cardinal concerns of British foreign policy was the so-called Russian bogy. It was thought that Russia, which had already marched to the Pacific Ocean and even annexed Alaska (which a careless Tsar eventually sold for a paltry sum to the USA) and before which the decadent Khanates of Central Asia were toppling one after another, would not be content with anything less than the conquest of India. It was to keep that bogy at arm's length that Great Britain fought three wars in Afghanistan, which it sought to keep as a buffer state under British influence. And when the bogyman put on the red cloak of communism he looked all the more terrible.

At that time Jawaharlal Nehru had just made his debut

on the Indian political stage. He visited the USSR in 1927 and wrote a series of articles which opened the eyes of the people of India to the tremendous happenings there. I myself had been anxious to visit the USSR. In 1934, my wife and I set out on a tour of Europe. We wanted to visit all the states of Europe. The Government of India endorsed Anujee's passport for all countries in Europe; mine, to all countries except the USSR and Turkey. It was not safe to let a young Indian enter Communist Russia or Kemalist Turkey and incur the danger of being infected by their revolutionary spirit! I then little expected that in less than twenty years I would be called upon to represent India in the Soviet Union.

Until the end of the Second World War, India had had no relations with the USSR. With China and the USA, she had established relations of a sort during the Second World War. Those countries agreed to receive a representative of India with the title of 'Agent-General for India'. He could not be designated Ambassador or Minister, for under the Vienna Conference of 1811 which regulated matters of protocol only independent States were entitled to send diplomatic representatives. China and the USA, however, agreed to give diplomatic status, next to that of Ministers, to the Agent-General for India. I myself was appointed Agent-General for India in China. My title was a source of confusion to the Chinese. They knew agents - commercial agents. They knew generals, too, for a general grew on every Chinese bush. But they were mystified by the title, Agent-General. Indeed, when I went to Sinkiang from India at the end of 1944, a prominent newspaper in Kashgar wrote that an important Indian general had arrived in Sinkiang to discuss common military problems. One look at me, however, dispelled the illusion that I had anything to do with the army!

On the Double Tenth, that is the 10th of October, 1943, which was the thirty-second anniversary of the Revolution of 1911—and it was on that day that I presented my credentials as Agent-General for India—President and Madame

Chiang Kai-shek gave an at home; and the heads of diplomatic missions were presented to them in strict order of seniority. When my turn came immediately after Ministers, the Turkish and Brazilian Chargés d'Affaires pushed themselves to the front, gesticulating and protesting that they must have precedence over a mere Agent-General, a term

unknown in their diplomatic vocabulary.

The first specimen of a diplomat I came across was Sir Horace Seymour, the British Ambassador. He looked like a country squire who had strayed into diplomacy, and his words, which he always mumbled, carried greater weight than those of others who gave themselves diplomatic airs. He and the Australian and Canadian Ambassadors made much of me, as if to demonstrate that the Commonwealth was based on the principle of equality. Some others, however, were inclined to regard me as an interloper in the charmed circle of diplomats. Not so Paniushkin, the Soviet Ambassador. He was not only the first Russian Ambassador I met but the first Russian; and I was touched by the courtesy and consideration he extended to me from the outset; he was one of the few heads of missions who had the courtesy to return my call personally by coming to my house. Others stood on their dignity; they received me but returned my call by inviting me to a meal or simply by sending their cards by post.

At one of Paniushkin's dinners, I was seated next to him; and the Turkish Chargé d'Affaires below me. To this the Turk strongly objected. Paniushkin replied that he had chosen to seat me above the representative of Turkey, because whereas Turkey remained neutral in the war against Fascism and Nazism, India fought bravely on the side of the Allies. Our relations with Petrov, Paniushkin's successor, were equally cordial. When I was posted to Moscow in 1952. I inquired about Petrov and was sorry to hear that he had

passed away.

I also came into contact with Soviet representatives in the course of an overland journey, mostly on foot and on horse-

back, which I performed in 1944 from India to China across the Himalayas, the Karakorams and the Pamirs, and then, in a lorry, along the Kunlun range to Khotan and Keria to the east, and along the Sino-Soviet frontier to Urumchi in the north. Schesterikov, the Soviet Consul-General in Kashgar, and Evsev in Urumchi were most considerate and hospitable. Their relations with their British and American colleagues in Sinkiang were also very friendly and reflected the cordial relations which existed between the Allies during the war. I, a novice in diplomacy, was amused to observe that vodka. whisky and mao-tai also played their part in cementing international friendship. Michael Gillett, the British Consul-General in Kashgar, could stand up to any Russian or Chinese in the pastime of drinking. His capacity was reflected in a Welsh rhyme which I learnt from him but which I did not dare to practise:

Not drunk is he who from the floor Can rise alone and drink some more. But drunk is he who prostrate lies Without the power to drink or rise.

It must not be imagined that the diplomats in Sinkiang spent their time boozing and merrymaking. Far from it. They were earnest men who, in those lonely and inaccessible regions, kept the flag of their nations flying and played their part valiantly in the war effort. Stalingrad had turned the tide of Hitler's successes but his defeat was not yet in sight. The need for solidarity among the Allies was as great as ever.

Even before the end of the war, however, rifts began to appear in the lute of allied solidarity. Soon they would widen into the cold war which was the dominating feature of international relations in the first decade after the war.

WIDER CONTACTS

In 1945 I attended the San Francisco Conference as chief

adviser to the Indian delegation. The delegation reflected the British practice of keeping a careful balance between Hindus, Muslims and Princes. The Hindus were represented by Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar; the Muslims by Sir Teroze Khan Noon; and the Princes by Sir V. T. Krishnamachari, who had been Chief Minister of the Princely State of Baroda for more than a decade. Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar, the leader of the delegation, who rose high in the favour of the British Government both because of his ability and his antipathy to the Indian National Congress, was a brilliant speaker and enjoyed a great reputation among Western representatives in the U.N. The Soviet representative, however, put him in his place by saving amidst loud applause: "We hope the voice of an independent India will be heard in this hall before long."

When our delegation was in London on its way to San I rancisco we heard of the death of President Ro sevelt. Ressevelt knew that India could not be denied independence much longer. Whenever he got an opportunity, he prodded Churchill, to his intense annoyance, to grant independence to India. Once, experied by Roosevelt's per istence. Churchill retorted, 'Take India, if that is what you want;

but remember you will have a blood bath."

Churchill gave a barquet in henour of the Commonweith delegate and a preceived us at No. 10 Dovving Street. He left it to I fin, the Foreign Secretars, the epond the incited small south in I don's toke with leave I seebedings to order the increasing differences between the Allie and especially with the Soviet United Charchill control. In the concept in of Charchill as a Chent Point especially great Annual Plasma. He posses beautiful to the first transfer of States and the Charchill as a Chent Point especially great Annual Plasma. He posses beautiful to the Charchill as a first annual transfer of the Charchill annual transfer of the Charchill as a first annual transfer of the Charchill annual transfer of the Charchill

herself. If, for instance, China were to raise the question of Hong Kong, he would invoke the veto and say, 'You can have Hong Kong over my dead body!'

When we reached San Francisco in the middle of April, the war was not yet over but there were already signs that the war-time alliance between the Soviet Union and the West was breaking up. There had been differences between them as to how the war should be conducted and even suggestions that each side was selfishly putting its own interest before the common interest of defeating the common enemy. For instance, the Soviet Government complained that its Allies were taking an unconscionably long time to launch the Second Front Early in 1944, Paniushkin told me a story, then current in Moscow. A young Soviet citizen was found daily praying for the second front at the door-steps of a church at a fee of a rouble a day. Someone asked him why he, an able-bodied individual, did not take up a better job than this low-paid one. 'It may be low-paid,' he replied; 'but it is permanent!'

There was an acrimonious controversy not only as to when but where the second front should be launched. Churchill urued that the second front should be launched through the Balkans, 'the soft under-belly of Europe'. He feared that if the Soviet armies got to the capitals of Fastern Europe first, those countries would go into the Communist camp. Stalin apposed Charchill's proposal and Roosevelt sided with him: the second front was launched through France; and Churchill's prediction that all fastern Europe would go communist proved correct.

There were also serious differences regarding the ordering of the world after the war. Stalin was not keen on the revival of the League of Nations. He had bitter memories of the League; he could never forget that Russia had been expelled from the League. Stalin feared that a resurrected Learner would be dominated by the USA, because, with the support of the twenty Lain American States, the USA could always count on a comfortable majority. Stalin was therefore

determined that there should be built-in devices in the Charter for the protection of Soviet interests. Because of these increasing differences with the West, Stalin even began to lose his interest in a world-body. In order to show how little he cared for it, he refused to depute Molotov, the Foreign Minister, to the Conference in San Francisco, but left it to Gromyko, then a comparatively junior diplomat, to represent the USSR.

Stalin, however, was moved by the death of President Roosevelt. When the news was conveyed to him by the American ambassador in Moscow, he exclaimed, 'What will happen to Soviet-American relations now? What can we do?'. The American ambassador adroitly replied, 'Send

Molotov to San Francisco.' And Stalin agreed.

When we were meeting in San Francisco, tremendous events were happening in Europe. The war was mounting to a climax. The European war actually came to a close while the Conference was sitting. Hitler fell; whether he died in front of the Chancellery in Berlin or had escaped, we did not know. But, as Churchill said, wherever Hitler was, whether in this world or in the other, we might rest assured that he would be taken care of by the appropriate local authority. Mussolini fell too. Ten years previously, when Anujee and I were in Milan, we had heard a hundred thousand boys and girls, waiting for Mussolini to come and distribute prizes, shouting excitedly, 'Duce! Duce! Duce!' Now his body and the body of his mistress hung upside down, kicked and spat upon by his countrymen. On that very day I saw the representative of Ethiopia rising at the San Francisco Conference and reminding the audience of the words which the Emperor of Ethiopia had uttered ten years previously when that country was foully attacked by Italy. 'If you care for peace without justice,' said the Emperor, 'you shall have neither peace nor justice.' And I recalled the words which Mussolini's son, who was now trying to enter Switzerland with the aid of a faked passport, had uttered on seeing the black bodies of thousands of Ethiopians, mown down by Italian machineguns, that they reminded him of 'the beautiful unfolding of a black rose'.

VE day came and went, almost unnoticed. It was very different from the armistice after the First World War. Then I was at Oxford and saw a whole nation in a delirium of joy and relief. But now business went on as usual. There was another war on, a war particularly grim for America, and the grimness of it was brought home by the daily reports of casualties at Okinawa. Besides, the international situation was not such as to inspire joy. The ogre was dead, but the apparition was there. On the whole, the American public behaved like a child expected to rejoice on some auspicious occasion but finding it difficult to do so.

A new cause for anxiety was provided by the discovery of the atom bomb. When the first atom bomb burst over the desert of New Mexico with a brilliance which turned night into day, Robert Oppenheimer, the great American scientist, who had contributed largely to this achievement and later regretted it, exclaimed that it reminded him of the words in

the Bhagvadgita:

If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst into the sky, that would be like the splendour of the Mighty One.... I am become Death, the Destroyer of the World.

Would the atom bomb, indeed, prove to be 'Death, the Destroyer of the World?' This thought troubled Oppenheimer, but it did not seem to worry President Truman, who, in his first statement after the use of the atom bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, gave his thanks to the Lord for imparting the secret of the atom to the USA and not to its enemies. In the light of later developments, one cannot but suspect that by 'enemies' Truman meant not merely Germany and Japan, who were on the point of collapse, but the Soviet Union also. The USA refused to share the secret of the atom bomb with the USSR; and this, too, aggravated the relations between the USA and the USSR.

At the San Francisco Conference, the first dispute between the Soviet Union and the West broke out over the proposal of the USA to admit the Argentine Republic to the United Nations. Molotov, the Soviet representative, strongly objected to this proposal. He denounced the Argentine as a Lascist State and quoted Roosvelt's own description of the Argentine as 'the headquarters of the Pascist movement in this hemisphere and a potential source of infection'. He opposed its admission vehemently in the Executive Committee, in the Steering Committee and in the Plenary Session. At the Plenary Session the question was decided in favour of the admission of the Argentine by a majority of 28 to 20, and among the 28 were 20 Latin American States. This gave a handle to Moletov to show that the UN was going to be dominated by America and that questions would be decided by blocyoung and not by merits, for apart from the latin American States only 8 States could be found to vote for the admission of the Argentine. And yet the resolution was carried.

Molotov used the Argentine incident effectively to reinforce his argument for the need of a cast-iron veto for the Great Powers in the Charter of the U.N. No question roused so much heat at the San Francisco Conference as the veto. On this matter the five Great Powers stood, or tried to stand, solidly together against the rest, who called themselves the Little 45' and opposed, or at least tried to get a modification of, the provision of the veto in the Charter. They quoted Churchill's own description of the veto as 'a shield for the strong and mockers for the weak'. When we little P wers, are lighting,' said a Latin American dalegate, 'the Great Powers will stop us. But if and when the Great Powers are at Eggerheads, God help us

All the Great Pewers remarked the rich as an initial mable sate mand for their interests. The release was refer to be would promote an emblet seen to the of Proceedings and their second control of the San Liance of Concesses, the months of the research of the research of the second control of the research of the second control o

cil. This hope has not been fulfilled. Great Britain used the veto rarely. The most memorable use of the veto by Great Britain was in 1956, when she clamped it down to nullify a resolution, which had been supported by the USA as well as the USA, taking her to task for her attack on Suez. The USA used the veto on many more occasions; and the USSR far more frequently than the USA. The more extensive use of the veto by the Soviet Union doubtless reflected the numerical inferiority of Communist members of the UN as compared with the supporters of the USA. The veto or 'Rule of Great Power Unanimity', which was expected to be a solvent of the cold war, became its symbol and instrument.

I must confess that at San Francisco, I was bewildered by the attitude of the Soviet Union. The conduct of the Soviet representative. Molotov, who was rigid and inflexible, seemed to confirm the notion, prevalent in the West, that the Soviet Union was most difficult to live with. At San Francisco, the USSR showed itself as a Great Power, strong, determined, pugnacious, insusceptible to appeasement, defiant of public opinion and yet ready to court it when the need arose What, I asked myself, did this phenomenon portend? Did it mean that an organization, based on the unanimity of the Big Five, was doomed to failure? Did Russia cherish lurking designs to paint Lurope -and the world - red? Did her policy denote a revival of the old Tsarist dreams of territorial aggrandizement? Or did it merely signify an exaggerated and -in the light of instory not unjustified search for security on her borders? Or was its conduct the result of its prolonged isolation and the lears engendered by it? There is little doubt, in retrospect, that the greatest achievement of the San I rancisco Conference was hat it drew the Soviet Union our of its enforced isolation into the stream of international life, where it scon began to play a vital part.

I PRESENT CREDENTIALS

On 2 September, 1946, Nehru formed the interim National Government of India. Though India was still a part of the British Empire and not even a Dominion yet, Nehru lost no time in taking the reins of government into his own hands. To him independence meant independence without any reservation. It was he who moved the famous resolution at the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress in 1927 which adopted full independence as the goal of India. He said:

'It [the resolution] means what it says. It means complete independence. It means control over the defence forces of the country. It means control over the economic policy of the country. It means control over relations with foreign countries. Whether we achieve it today or tomorrow, a year hence, or ten years hence, I cannot say. That depends on your strength and the strength of the country.'

Almost the first step taken by Nehru was to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. It was also the first striking assertion of independent India's sovereignty. With other major States, India, even under Britain, had relations of a sort. With the Soviet Union British India had no relations whatsoever.

To a student of history, this is not a matter for surprise. As already said, 'the Russian bogy' was one of the cardinal concerns of British foreign policy in the 19th century. Between the two World Wars, Great Britain could not make up its mind who was its real enemy, Russia or Germany, Stahn or Hitler. The question answered itself on the outbreak of the Second World War; and England and Russia soon found themselves in the same boat as allies against Germany. Hardly, however, had the boat weathered the storm and reached the port of peace when dissension again broke out between the crstwhile allies. The cold war was on,

India was determined to keep aloof from the cold war. In his very first broadcast as Foreign Minister, on 7 September 1946, only six days after he had formed the interim National Government, Nehru said:

We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disasters on an even vaster scale....The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer co-operation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this One World that free India will work....We send our greetings to the people of the United States of America to whom destiny has given a major role in international affairs.... To that other great nation of the modern world, the Soviet Union, which also carries a vast responsibility for shaping world events, we send greetings.

Before long Nehru sent more than greetings to the Soviet Union. He instructed V. K. Krishna Menon and myself to approach the Soviet representative in New York with a proposal for the establishment of diplomatic relations. We were then in New York as members of the Indian delegation to the first General Assembly of the United Nations. Our delegation was headed by Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit and included a number of distinguished Indians who had made a mark in Indian public life. I was the only link between the delegation to the San Francisco Conference and the one to the General Assembly. We had only to mention to the Soviet representative the desire of the Government of India to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR for the Soviet Government to agree.

At the General Assembly India discovered that there were many questions on which she and the Soviet Union saw eye to eye with each other. India specially appreciated the Soviet Union's valuant support to its resolution, condemning the treatment of coloured peoples in South Africa. It was in opposing the South African Government's policy of rampant racialism, called apartheid, that Mahatma Gandhi evolved

the doctrine of satyagraba or soul-force on the model of the teachings of Evo Loistoy, John Ruskin and the Sermon on the Mount. Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit sponsored our Resolution, condemning South African policy, with almost emotional fervour. 'If', she said, 'Jesus Christ were to seek to enter South Africa today he would be excluded as a prohibited immigrant.' For a long time, the fate of the resolution was in doubt, for the UN was dominated by Western Powers and had only nine representatives from Asian and African countries. To our great joy, however, the esolution was arried by a majority of one. Inat was the Feath may of the stifting of that world body's conscience, which in 1962 led to a unanimous resolution against South Africa and Portugal.

In 1947 Mrs Vijayalakshan Pandit was appointed India's first ambassador to the USSR. She was succeeded by Dr Radhakrishnan, one of our foremost intellectuals, who had been holding the post of Professor of Compact of Religion

at Oxford. It was my privilege to succeed this

I presented my credentials as ambas add to President Shvernik on 18 October, 1952. It was my 54t, but day, and I could not have celebrated it by a more auspic has event. The ceremony was simplicity itself as compared with the one at which I presented my credentials as India's first arrbassador to China in 1945. In Chungking Linad to go into a hall where President Chains Kurshe's was seated bow to him three times, walk forward seven steps and repeat this procedire thrice. I then delivered a long specific rate of a war hi was translated into Climese, and Chair a derivered a requirity for a speech in Chinese when was the lated a solithing Hon cane the rate of call per of the care of frad to walk the weather than the state of the later to report the teat factor (respectively). The second trace estition of the man policy to Manager Burney Committee Date of the Committee o entitia: dissert e kar Gerra Visita i i i i te, like to like History and the on the product to will a govern

RUSSIA BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

One of my joys in life is to go in and out of old bookshops. On our way to Moscow by sea via London. I went into an old bookshop in Hampstead and picked up three slipp-soiled volumes of the Memoirs of Maurice Paléologue, the last I rench ambassador to the court of the Tsars Paléologue's day-to-day diary describes the events of a dramatic period, culminating in the murder of Rasputin, the abdication of the Tsar and the outbreak of the Revolution.

The Russia in which I served was very different from the Russia in which Paleologue served. The Revolution has changed the face of Russia beyond recognition. What is more important, it has also largely changed the spirit of Russia. The foreigner's assessment of Russian character, too, has changed. From this point of view, the observations contained in Paléologue's memoirs are of great interest.

Paléologue sums up Russian character in two words, dreams and disillusionment. He quotes Chekhov's words: 'Why do we tire so soon? How is it that after squandering so much fervour, passion and faith we almost always come to ruin before the age of thirty? And when we tall, how is it that we never rise again?' The Russian, says Paléologue, sees reality only through a mist of dreams. He has no piecise notion of time or space. Instability is the very essence of his character. The Russian is essentially an individualist; he is unable to unite with others for the common good. When three Germans meet, ran a prover's, 'they immediately form a Verein and elect a president. When three Russians meet they immediately form three parties.' Is it a wonder, I thought to miself, that I eran insisted that in the Societ Union there should be one party and the only

The Russians in Paleologue's days were to door takel. I'e poor as well as the nen were seized by a king of wander-lust. Munks roamed all over the country, anabe to settle

down anywhere. They were eternal pilgrims, wandering from monastery to monastery, sanctuary to sanctuary, begging for a piece of bread 'in the name of Christ'. The Russians of high society, driven by a desire to avoid ennui, were always on the move. They were to be seen in large numbers around the flesh-pots of Paris, Vienna, Venice, Biarritz and Monte Carlo. Again, I thought to myself, is it any wonder that the Soviet Government has placed a curb on aimless travel?

In Paléologue's eyes, the Russian was deeply religious. His was the evangelical kind of religion, the religion of the Sermon on the Mount. What appeals to him most in the Christian Revelation, says Paléologue, is the mystery of love which, emanating from God, has redeemed the world. The essential articles of his credo are the words in the Sermon in Galilee: 'Love one another—love your enemies; do good to them that hate you—pray for them that despitefully use you—I ask not sacrifice but love.'

Yet the Russian's religious propensities often took weird forms. There arose a number of curious religious sects, such as the Khlysty or flagellants and the Skoptzy or self-mutilators. The Skoptzy believed that eunuchs would find it easy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They therefore resorted to castration and removed those organs which they deemed 'the receptacles of the Devil'. The Khlysty came into prominence in this century as the notorious Rasputin himself belonged to that sect. Prince Yussoupov, who murdered Rasputin, has described them thus: 'They claimed to be inspired with the Word and to incarnate Christ. They attained this heavenly communion by the most bestial practices, a monstrous combination of the Christian religion with pagan rites and primitive superstitions. The faithful used to assemble by night in a hut or in a forest clearing, lit by hundreds of tapers. The purpose of these radenyi, or ceremonies, was to create a religious cestasy, an erotic frenzy. After invocations and hymns, the faithful formed a ring and began to sway in rhythm, and then to whirl round and round, spinning faster and faster. As a state of dizziness was essential for

the "divine influx", the master of ceremonies flogged any dancer whose vigour abated. The radenyi ended in a horrible orgy, everyone rolling on the ground in ecstasy or in convulsions. They preached that he who is possessed by the "Spirit" belongs not to himself but to the "Spirit", who controls him and is responsible for all his actions and for any sins he may commit."

Such, then, was Russia, as Paléologue saw it, on the eve of the Revolution. In those days the mujik was a vague. preoccupied, absent-minded creature. The university students, says Paléologue, were a sorry sight with their haggard faces, drawn features, hollow cheeks, frail figures, thin arms, pronounced stoop and emaciated bodies in worn-out and tattered clothing. The Jews were confined to ghetioes. The government followed the doctrine, enunciated by Catherine the Great, that anything which was not expressly permitted was forbidden to a Jew. A Jewish girl could not come to Petrograd and study in the university unless she had obtained a prostitute's licence. Prostitution was rampant; Paléologue estimated that there were 50,000 prostitutes in Petrograd alone. How different is the state of affairs today! Racial discrimination is punishable by law. As for prostitution, we never saw in Moscow a single member of the most ancient profession on earth.

Despite her backwardness, Russia had an almost Messianic faith in her destiny. This was expressed with great fervour in a Pan-Slavic poem, called 'Russian Geography', by F. I. Tiutchev: 'Moscow, the City of Peter and the City of Constantine—these are the three sacred capitals of the Russian Empire. But where are its frontiers on the North and the East, on the South and the West? Destiny will show us in the future. Seven inland seas and seven great rivers, from the Nile to the Neva, the Elbe to the Yellow Sea, the Volga to the Euphrates, the Ganges to the Danube—there is the Russian Empire, and it will last throughout the centuries! The Spirit has predicted this and Daniel has prophesied it.'

To Paléologue this prophecy was laughable. A deep chasm

separated Russia as she would be, from Russia as she was. Russia, writes Paléologue, is precisely where Europe would have been had there been no Renaissance, no Reformation and no French Revolution. He expresses his contempt of Russia in recording a summary of a conversation with the Tsar. In accordance with the instructions of his government he saw the Tsar in order to persuade him to fling more Russian divisions into the war against Germany. The Tsar pointed out that even making full allowance for Russia's greater population, she had already contributed a far larger number of soldiers than France had done. What an argument, thought Paléologue. It was not numbers that counted. As compared with France, where literacy was almost universal, in Russia 150 million out of 180 million could not read or write. 'I rom the point of view of culture and as a product of civilization,' wrote Paléologue, 'the Frenchman and the Russian are not in the same class.' And thus he came to the conclusion, at once complacent and melancholy, that the life of a Frenchman killed in war was worth infinitely more than that of a Russian.

Paléologue failed to realize that it was in order to remove the disparity in science and culture between Russia and Western Europe that the Revolution was staged. He was in Petrograd in 1917 when the man who was to forge the revolution arrived. The first impression produced by Ler in was tremendous but mixed. 'That is the raying of a lunatic!'. cried Boodane, who head his first speech, 'Dehriums,' said Plekhanov, 'are occasionally interesting,' A foreign journal st who v as present on the occasion called it a 'thunderlike speech'. 'It seemed,' he said, 'as it all the elements, and the very spirit, of universal destruction had risen from their lairs, knowns neither doubts nor barriers, neither personal difficulties nor personal considerations, to lover through the banquet chambers of Kshesinskava, above the heads of the bewitched disciples.' Many hopefully thought that I can had over-reached himself. 'Lenin', said Milyukov, a member of the Government, to Paleclogue on 18 April, 'was a hopeless failure with the Soviet yesterday. He argued the pacifist cause so heatedly and with such effrontery and lack of tact that he was compelled to stop and leave the room amidst a storm of booing. He will never survive it.' And Paléologue answered him in Russian fashion, 'God grant it.'

Paléologue remained in Russia long enough to realize the extent of Lenin's power. 'Lenin,' he wrote, 'Utopian dreamer and fanatic, prophet and metaphysician, blind to any idea of the impossible or the absurd, a stranger to all feelings of justice or mercy, violent, Machiavellian and crazy with vanity, places at the service of his Messianic vision a strong unemotional will, pitiless logic and amazing powers of persuasion and command. Judging by the reports I have received of his first speeches, he is insisting on the revolutionary dictatorship of the working and rural masses; he is preaching that the proletariat has no country and proclaiming his longing for the defeat of the Russian armies. When anyone attacks his crude fancies with some argument, drawn from the realm of reality, he replies with the gorgeous phrase: "So much the worse for reality!" The man is all the more dangerous because he is said to be pure-minded, temperate and ascetic. Such as I see him in my mind's eye, he is a compound of Savonarola and Marat, Blanqui and Bakunin.'

Paléologue left Moscow soon after the Revolution with a feeling of profound sadness. He ends his book by quoting

the words of the village idict in Boris Godinov:

Weep, my holy Russia, weep! For thou art entering into darkness. Weep, my holy Russia, weep! For thou shalt surely die.

But Russia did not die. Communist Russia, however, nearly died when counter-revolution, aided and abetted by a dozen fore gn powers, raised its head soon after the Revolution. Quite by accident, Anujee discovered an old note-book in which her mother once entered recipes for various Indian dishes nearly 20 years ago. It had been carefully wrapped

up in an Indian newspaper, the Amrita Bazar Patrika, dated

10 August 1918.

To me, as ambassador-designate to the USSR, the most interesting items in the Patrika were those relating to that country. The Revolution was but a year old; counter-revolution was afoot, and civil war had broken out. The state of affairs in Russia at that time was graphically described in the House of Commons by Lloyd George, who said that 'it is impossible to ascertain from day to day what is the government of a single Russian village'. Though it is always the policy of Great Britain to deal with de facto governments, said Lloyd George, 'we shall not hesitate to render every help to enable Russia's self-emancipation'. That is, Russia's emancipation from Bolshevism. As if in fulfilment of this declaration, a news item appears in another corner of the Patrika to the effect that on 7 August the English and French have landed at Archangel and are advancing along the railways. The Czechoslovak Legion, together with the White Guards, has taken important centres in Siberia, the Urals and the Middle Volga; both forces are on their way to Kazan so as to cut off Tsaritsyn [later named Stalingrad, and now Volgogradl, from Moscow. The Caucasus, Russia's granary, is almost lost and American troops have landed in Siberia.

These events of the early years of the Revolution have burned themselves into the mind of the people of Russia. Soon after our arrival in Moscow, we saw at the State Academic Maly theatre a new play, the Northern Lights, based on N. Nikitin's Aurora Borealis, for which he was awarded a Stalin Prize in 1951. The theme was the Soviet people's struggle against armed foreign intervention in 1918-20.



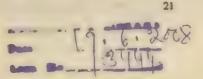
2 THE FREEZE

THE NINETEENTH CONGRESS

WHEN I arrived in Moscow, the Nineteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Party of the Soviet Union was in session. The by-laws of the Party provided that the Congress should meet once in three years, but none had been held since 1939. In Lenin's time, the Congress used to be an annual affair. After 1924, when Lenin died, only five Congresses had been held in 28 years—at increasingly infrequent intervals, namely in 1925, 1927, 1930, 1934 and 1939. Since Stalin's death, the Congress has been held regularly every

three years, as provided in the rules of the Party.

Stalin's Congresses were very different from those of Lenin. In Stalin's later days, the Congress became a mere rubberstamp for registering his will. Lenin, on the contrary, had his peers, who were well-versed in the ideology and technique of revolution and who did not hesitate to cross swords with him, to argue with him and to differ from him. But even in Lenin's lifetime it was realized that there must be limits to opposition. At the Tenth Congress, held in 1921, 'groups with separate platforms and separate group discipline' were banned; and deviationism became a crime. This might be against the principles of parliamentary democracy, as we understand it. Yet who, seeing the havoc which groupism in the Indian National Congress has been causing in various States in India, can deny that, but for the monolithic character of the Party in the Soviet Union, that country would or not have been able to make the progress which it has achieved in the face of the most formidable obstacles which any country has ever encountered in history?





On the eve of the Nineteenth Congress, Stalin published a book, The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR. It clearly reflected the advent of the cold war. In this, his latest thesis, Stalin pointed out that, thanks to the action of the capitalist countries which had resorted to an economic blockade of the Soviet Union, the world had become split into two parallel markets—on the one hand, a powerful socialist market, compact, self-contained, with unity of aim and method, stretching, with the accession of China, from the Pacific Ocean to the Oder; and, on the other hand, a capitalist market, widely scattered, torn by internal dissensions, liable to recurrent economic crises and nervous of the competition of Japan and Germany, which had been set up by the capitalist countries themselves with the 'criminal aim' of opposing Russia. These contradictions in the capitalist camp, said Stalin, were likely to result in wars between those countries themselves; and it was not impossible that England and later France might come into conflict with the USA in their efforts to cast off the American yoke. This prediction was in line with the theory of Karl Marx that war is inevitable; but in 1956, the Twentieth Congress, taking into account the latest world developments, including the discovery of the atom bomb, had the courage to proclaim that there was no fatal inevitability about war.

The Nineteenth Congress was the last Congress which Stalin was destined to attend. He spoke but once, and that was a thanksgiving speech. He assured the communist delegates from other countries that just as they had supported the Soviet Union in its struggle for peace, so 'our Party must in turn extend support to them and also to their people in their struggle for liberation, in their struggle for the maintenance of peace'. This was criticized as an open declaration of war, an open indication of the Soviet Union's determination to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.

I received a telegram from Tyahji, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, asking me to protest against Stalin's utterance. I thought that it would be pointless to do so. Stalin's statement was made in the course of a fervent thanksgiving speech addressed to the delegates from about 80 countries in the world; it was not directed at India; indeed, the few references to India in the course of the Congress were not unfriendly. Moreover, the real danger to India lay not so much in the possibility of external interference as in the existence of internal evils. Poverty, illiteracy, ignorance, these were our real enemies. I recalled the words of Pericles on a famous occasion: Let us fear our own mistakes more than the strategy of our opponents.

I was glad that Prime Minister Nehru agreed with my views." " at a real and a man part of the analysis

THE COLD WAR SPREADS

At the end of 1952, the Republican Party, after a long period in the wilderness, came to power in the USA; and Eisenhower became President. That Party contained many reactionary and bellicose elements. Nevertheless Eisenhower was known to be a man of peace. The American people were beginning to be tired of the Korean war which had broken out in 1950 and in which American casualties had been mounting; and Eisenhower had, in the course of his election speech, promised them that if necessary he would go personally to Korea and fetch peace. It was hoped that he would prove true to his election promises. Few suspected that he would be led by the nose and practically reduced to impotence by his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

In the beginning of 1953, the President, in his State of the Union message, made a disturbing declaration. He said that he had instructed that the United States 7th Fleet should be 'no longer employed to shield Communist China'. That was a strange way of putting things. So lar, the 7th Fleet had been employed in shielding not so much China from Formosa as Formosa from China. Behind the US fleet and with US assistance Chiang Kai-shek had been allowed to build up his strength; and now it looked as if he was being unleashed to harass China.

The political consequences of the American decision outweighed its military advantages. It destroyed, for the moment, all chances of a settlement of the Korean war, for the Chinese fought on with greater determination than ever. It closed the door to the recognition of China and its admission to the United Nations. It confirmed the sinister tactics of letting Asians fight Asians. The Americans had taunted Russia with carrying on a war by proxy in Korea; it now seemed as if they were going to do it themselves in China.

The methods of John Foster Dulles caused annoyance not merely in Asia but in Europe. The British were peeved at the decision about Formosa, which was taken without consulting them. The French were annoyed with the peremptory demand that they should ratify the European Defence Community. 'Who wants to re-arm Germany?', asked Le Monde. 'Americans, and not we. After what has happened in Germany during the last few weeks, we are going to be doubly careful. Dulles's manner has deprived the free world of what facade of unity, decency and dignity it still had.' And Life, the American magazine, let off a blast on French politics which it described as a 'bedroom farce' and France herself as 'a whore only waiting to stuff billion-dollar bills down her stocking'.

For the Soviet government, a more serious step taken by the USA was that it reiterated its determination to promote 'the liberation of captive peoples' within the Soviet orbit and openly allotted a sum of one hundred million dollars for promoting subversive activities. Stalin was not prepared to take any risks. He decided to remove, and terrorize, any elements which might be tempted to listen to the gospel of liberation. Perhaps it was for this reason that he ordered the arrest of a number of doctors, mostly Jewish, and accused them of trying to put an end to the lives of distinguished Soviet personages at the behest of American and British

intelligence services.

It looked as if the arrest of these doctors was going to lead to further arrests and to a trial comparable in magnitude with the purges of the 'thirties. Soviet newspapers demanded that the ramifications of the plot should be thoroughly unravelled. 'Vigilance, vigilance and once again revolutionary vigilance', said Trud, should be the motto of the Soviet Union. Before, however, a fresh display of revolutionary vigilance could be staged, Stalin died and the doctors were released as 'esteemed citizens of the Soviet Union who have been grievously wronged'.

INTERVIEW WITH STALIN

On 17 February 1953. I had the honour of being received by Stalin. We left the embassy soon after 7.30 p.m. Vania, who drove us, was the proudest chauffeur on earth. He was beaming with happiness; and his happiness was complete when he managed to get a glimpse of Stalin himself. The next day, Raya, our Russian teacher, insisted on shaking hands with me—in order, she said, that she might tell her people that she had the privilege of shaking hands with a man who had shaken hands with Stalin. Such was the cult which had grown up around Stalin's personality.

At the stroke of 8, I was ushered into a room where Stalin, dressed in a Party uniform with a high-necked coat, was standing. He came forward and shook hands with me and led me to his conference table. He sat at one end of the table; and I at the other, facing him. Between us on one side of the table was Pavlov, his interpreter; to Stalin's right was Malik, acting Minister for Foreign Affairs; and to my left, Kaul my

Secretary.

Stalin relaxed in his chair and said: 'Mr Ambassador, I am at your service.' Evidently, he expected me to open the conversation. I began by expressing my gratitude to him for

finding time to receive me. Stalin said that he was glad, very glad, to see me. He added that it was his duty, as Prime Minister, to receive foreign ambassadors. I remembered, however, that during five years he had received only three ambassadors.

I then told Stalin that Prime Minister Nehru had asked me to convey his greetings and good wishes for his health. Stalin asked me to communicate his thanks to our Prime Minister and his own greetings and good wishes to him. I said that I had received every courtesy and consideration from the Foreign Office and that I was impressed by the prevailing friendliness towards India. Stalin said that that was only natural: even shepherds in Russia were hospitable, and 'we are no worse than shepherds'. He added that the Soviet people regarded other peoples and races as equal and there was no trace of condescension in their attitude towards them. That was particularly the case towards 'the great people of India'.

Stalin then asked me what was the chief language in India. Was it Urdu or Hindi—or, as he called it, 'Hindu'? Were all the languages derived from the same stock? How did they come to have separate individual developments? In particular, what was the language spoken by the Gujaratis? I gave—I hope appropriate answers to these questions. Towards the end of our conversation, Stalin reverted to the subject of languages and asked whether it was true that Pakistan had been evolving a language of its own. I said that Urdu had developed as a language of the camp in India but that a number of Persian and Arabic words were now being added to it. 'In that case', said Stalin, 'it cannot be a real national language.'

I gave Stalin a brief explanation of our foreign policy, its genesis in our national struggle and in Gandhiji's teachings, and its objectives and methods. As an illustration, I referred to our repeated efforts to find a settlement in Korea. I recalled our Prime Minister's message to Stalin soon after the Korean war had started and Stalin's positive response thereto, our

opposition to the crossing of the 38th parallel on the ground that it would extend the theatre of hostilities, our vote against the resolution denouncing China as an aggressor, and our recent effort in the United Nations to remove the last hurdle to a settlement, namely, the dispute over the repatriation of prisoners of war. Our resolution had been put forward of our own accord in our search for peace and we were sorry that its nature had been seriously misunderstood in the Soviet Union. I hoped that this would provoke Stalin to say something about the Korean resolution, but he remained as unforthcoming as the Sphinx, saying merely, and somewhat mechanically, 'Da, da' (Yes, yes). For aught I knew, he might never have heard of our Korean resolution at all!

Stalin was forthcoming, however, on Formosa. 'We are against the widening of hostilities,' he said. 'So is the Government of India. But in America there are certain people who are bent on widening the conflict because they want more business and greater profits. Not all Americans are like that, but many are. It is no use preaching morals to them, because they are out to accumulate profits even at the cost of blood.' I said that the reactions to recent American moves in the Far East had been adverse throughout the world, including such countries as the United Kingdom and Canada. These reactions would, I thought, have a restraining influence on American policy. 'There is no sign of it yet,' said Stalin dryly. He then went on to say: 'The peasant is a very simple man but a very wise man. When the wolf attacks him, he does not attempt to teach it morals, but tries to kill it. And the wolf knows this and behaves accordingly.' And casting my eye on the pad on which Stalin had been doodling, I found there a number of wolves in various poses.

Stalin inquired whether we had any commerical relations with Japan. I said that these relations were growing. Then Japan will undersell you and flood your markets with cheap goods,' said Stalin with a smile. I said that this had certainly happened in the past but we were now wiser.

He then turned his attention to the army. Apologizing

for the question, he asked whether India had a sufficiently large army. I said that our army was meant essentially for defence and not for adventures abroad. 'But is your army capable of defending India?' asked Stalin. I said that we had a compact, well trained and well-disciplined army, but that our air force and navy were still in their infancy. 'It is difficult to defend a country effectively without a powerful air force,' said Stalin.

This led him to ask about India's relations with Pakistan. I said that Kashmir continued to be a stumbling-block in the establishment of friendly relations; nevertheless, India and Pakistan had a common international outlook, as was shown in such vital matters as the recognition of China and the refusal to recognize the Bao Dai regime in Viet Nam. Recently, however, there had been reports that Pakistan intended to join the Middle East Defence Organization. We felt that this would be a very unfortunate development. Stalin made no comment but asked whether we had not considered the possibility of some kind of federation between India and Pakistan. 'That would be the ideal solution.' he said. I said that this would take time in view of the bitterness generated between Hindus and Muslims in the closing days of British rule. 'How primitive it is', interjected Stalin. 'to create a state on the basis of religion!'

Stalin then dilated on the way in which the problem of nationalities had been solved in the Soviet Union. In the old days, he said, the Russians oppressed other nationalities; and these other nationalities thereupon came to hate the Russians. He said that with so much emphasis that I thought to myself: here was the Georgian speaking—the Georgian who, as a schoolboy, started his career of political agitation by demanding that Georgian, and not Russian, should be the medium of instruction in Georgian schools. The Revolution, continued Stalin, marked the end of the period of Russian domination within the subcontinent. Now all nations within the Soviet Union were equal in every respect; and this had led to the solidarity and strength of the country.

I thereupon referred to our Prime Minister's own conception of a secular state and his unflinching adherence to it. By upholding this conception, we had been trying to make the fifty million Muslims in India feel that they were Indians in every respect. 'Of course they are Indians,' said Stalin; 'and your policy is just the right one.'

The conversation then ended with an exchange of expres-

sions of goodwill.

STALIN'S DEATH

In the small hours of 5 March 1953, I was awakened at Budapest, where I had gone to present my credentials as Minister to Hungary, by a telephone call from my First Secretary, Ram Sathe. He told me of an official announcement to the effect that Stalin had a cerebral haemorrhage, that one side of his body was paralysed, that he was breathing with difficulty and that it was unlikely that he would be able to take part in the affairs of state for a long time to come.

The news must have travelled round the world causing sorrow, despair and apprehension in the minds of millions and relief and hope in the minds of others. For a whole generation the name Stalin had stood for Russia, Russia had stood for communism, and communism had meant salvation or perdition for mankind. To the faithful and the fellow-travellers, to sceptics and critics, to friends as to

opponents, Stalin's illness was a mighty event.

It is strange that even in the presence of mighty events one thinks of one's petty self. My first thought was how fortunate I was to have been able to see Stalin in the nick of time. It was just over two weeks previously that I saw him. I was, in fact, the last foreign diplomat to be received by him. I was reminded of it in Hungary by constant telephone calls from press correspondents in London, Paris and Stockholm. Unfortunately, I was not able to receive these

calls as I was laid up with a recurrence of my old spinal trouble; it fell to Anujee to answer them. She was assailed by the most minute questions: What did Stalin look like when I saw him? How was he dressed, in military or Party uniform? Was he smoking his pipe? Did he wear boots or shoes? Was there a picture of Lenin in the room? Was he standing or sitting when he received me? Did he seem unduly worried over the world situation? Did he say anything memorable? Anujee answered these questions with her usual savoir faire. She knew everything about the interview but told the correspondents just as much as was good for them to know and no more.

The news of Stalin's illness was the more staggering as he had seemed exceptionally energetic during his last months. In the winter of 1952, he did not go south, as he used to do in previous years, but stayed on in the Kremlin. I saw him for the first time at the Bolshoi theatre on 6 November, the eve of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Revolution. The next day he stood for hours in the Red Square, watching the troops march past. A couple of months later, I saw him again in the Bolshoi theatre, attending a farewell performance given by a visiting troupe of Polish actors and actresses. Could he, one wondered, have had any premonition of his approaching end? It looked as if the candle of his life, which brought light and warmth and joy into millions of homes and utter ruin and misery to others, had been burning with the unusual glow that precedes extinction.

3 THE THAW

"A CHANGE OF HEART"

On Stalin's death, his mantle seemed to fall on the shoulders of Malenkov. At first the leadership of the Party as well as the Prime Ministership devolved on him. It was, however, realized that the accumulation of so much power in the hands of one man was inadvisable, as was clearly shown in the latter part of Stalin's rule. The posts of Prime Minister and First Secretary of the Party were accordingly separated. Malenkov remained Prime Minister and Khrushchev became First Secretary of the Party.

The new Government included such veterans as Voroshilov, Molotov, Mikoyan and Bulganin. A welcome addition was Marshal Zhukov, thrice Hero of the Soviet Union, who had played a magnificent part in the Second World War.

The Soviet Government lost no time in showing that its policy was to reduce the tensions, internal and external, generated by the cold war. In the course of his funeral oration, the Prime Minister expressed the desire of the Soviet Union to live in peace and friendship with all other nations. 'There is no disputed issue,' he said, 'which cannot be resolved peacefully on the basis of mutual understanding between the countries concerned. This refers to our relations with all states, including our relations with the USA.' This, however, was not easy, because the attitude of the US Government, which was dominated by John Foster Dulles, continued to be hostile. Even death was not able to allay the hostility between Russia and the West. While Stalin was dying, Dulles issued a statement to the Russian people recognizing them as 'the children of the same God who is the Father of all

peoples everywhere' and assuring them that 'despite the identity of government personalities' Almighty God would watch over them. History does not record a more sanctimonious attempt to drive a wedge between a people and their leader at the moment of his death. In his first press conference after Stalin's death, Dulles denounced him as 'a malevolent power'. Exultantly he went on to proclaim that 'the Stalin era is closed; the Eisenhower era has begun'. Little did he realize how such expressions jarred on the minds of other peoples. We in India, for instance, had no desire to live under a Stalin era or Eisenhower era; we were content to live under

the Gandhian era, as interpreted by Nehru.

The Soviet Government demonstrated its desire for peace in various ways. It knew that Germany was the hub of the cold war and therefore took a number of steps to reduce the tension between East Germany and West Germany. The controls on the autobahn linking Berlin with West Germany were relaxed; and applications for trade permits between East and West Germany, which hitherto had been either refused outright or inordinately delayed, began to be easily granted. This relaxation had an unexpected result. There was a rising of workers in East Germany which was firmly suppressed. And in the United Nations the prolonged deadlock over the appointment of a successor to Trygve Lie, the Secretary-General, was suddenly resolved by the Soviet Government's acceptance of the Western candidate, Dag Hammarskiold.

Before long there came a more substantial gesture of peace. The war in Korea had been dragging on for nearly three years, causing enormous Korean, Chinese and American casualties. Various attempts were made by disinterested countries to bring the conflict to an end. The last hurdle was a serious difference of opinion regarding the repatriation of prisoners of war. At the session of the General Assembly in 1952. India submitted a Resolution with the object of removing this difficulty. This Resolution did not find favour with the Soviet Union. Indeed, Vyshinsky, the Soviet representative in the UN, criticized it savagely. 'At best,' he said, 'you, Indians, are dreamers and idealists; at worst instruments of horrible American policy.' And yet, the very resolution which Vyshinsky had condemned became the basis of an armistice in Korea soon after the new government came to power.

This volte-face formed the clearest possible indication of the Soviet Government's desire for peace. Churchill recognized it ungrudgingly, as did Eisenhower. 'In this whole business of the peace approach,' said Eisenhower, 'we should take at face value every offer that is made to us, until it is proved not to be worthy of being so taken.' The next day, however, Dulles damped all hopes of peace by issuing a statement which proclaimed that 'nothing that has happened, or which seems to me likely to happen, has changed the basic

situation of danger in which we stand'.

Churchill's attitude was very different. 'We are heartened,' he said, 'by a number of friendly gestures on the part of the new Soviet government', though, he added characteristically, the communists have merely 'left off doing things which we have not been doing to them.' 'No one', he told the House of Commons, 'can measure the extent or purpose of the change which has become apparent in the Soviet mood, or even in their policy. . . It would be a grievous mistake if the desire to achieve a settlement were to hamper any spontaneous and healthy evolution which may be taking place in Russia . . . Nothing in the exposition of the foreign policy of NATO powers should interfere with or weaken what may be a profound change of heart in the Russians.'

Starting from these premises, so different from those current in the USA, Churchill proceeded to acknowledge the Soviet Union's desire for security which, in his opinion, was 'not incompatible with the freedom and security of Western Europe'. He proposed that there should soon be a conference at the highest level between leading Powers. At the worst such a conference would establish more intimate contacts;

at the best, a generation of peace.

Churchill's proposal was earnestly endorsed by Nehru in the course of a speech which he made in Parliament. 'The stakes,' he said, 'are the highest that the world offers, and war-weary and fear-laden humanity will bless those who will rid it of these terrible burdens and lead it to peace and happiness.'

PEACE IN KORFA

War-weary and fear-laden humanity had one cause for relief in the summer of 1953. The three-year war in Korea came to an end. So did a two-year war of words at the truce table. The leaders on both sides hailed the result with satisfaction. Dulles regarded it as a great victory for the United Nations; and Malenkov sent a telegram to General Kim Il-sung congratulating him on his 'great victory.' Newspaper commentators were less partisan. The London Times published a leading article with the appropriate title, 'Fought to a Draw', and Hanson Baldwin, the well-known military commentator, described the Korean war in the New York Imnes as 'a war that was not won but was not lost'.

Whoever had won or lost, Korea, as a whole, lost much and gained little. Its cities and villages were destroyed; its population was decimated; its economy was irretrievably disrupted. What is worse, Korea remained divided. North and South Korea remained exactly where they were in June 1950, when the war broke out. Their armies glared at each other across the 38th parallel. An undefeated ideology, represented by General II-sung, sat on one side of the Parallel; and an undefeated psychology, represented by Dr Syngman Rhee, sat on the other.

The cost of the war was terrible. I was reminded of Anatole France's Penguin Island in which the legislators of Gigantopolis vote for war against the Emerald Republic. When asked how much it will cost, the President of Gigantopolis

replies: 'Oh! it is an unimportant war which will hardly cost eight million dollars.' 'And what about the men?' 'The men are included in the dollars.'

The cost of the Korean war in dollars, American or Chinese, is not known, but the cost in human lives has been estimated. The USA sustained 142,000 casualties, of whom 23,000 were killed and over 105,000 wounded; Commonwealth troops suffered 7,000 casualties; the Turks, 3,000. These were inconsiderable compared with the huge losses suffered by the Chinese and the Koreans. South Korea is estimated to have sustained 184,000 casualties. As for North Korea, Dulles mentioned grimly that of the ten million people in North Korea, one in every three was dead. Many on both sides gave up their lives for they knew not what; but it was clear that for whatever cause, it was no nearer fulfilment than before.

When it was said that the United Nations achieved its objective in repelling the invasion of South Korea by North Korean armies it was forgotten that the initial invasion was thrown back as long ago as November 1950. By that date South Korea had been cleared of North Korean troops and the United Nations armies had reached their goal. China had not then entered the war. True, stories used to be put out that hordes of Chinese had been seen near the 38th parallel, but their number was so small that it became a joke among American GIs to ask one another: 'How many hordes make a platoon? Though China had not entered the war Chou En-lai told our ambassador in Peking that if the United Nations troops crossed the 38th parallel China would have no option but to go to the assistance of North Korea. We transmitted this warning in all seriousness to friendly governments, but it went unheeded and India was derided for her naivety in taking the Chinese threat at its face value.

Soon it became clear that China meant what she said. When the UN troops crossed the 38th parallel and reached the Yalu river, Chinese hordes did indeed appear. The US troops, which had been hypnotized by MacArthur's slogan.

Back Home for Christmas', were mown down in thousands and pushed back to the 38th parallel. Then, in a frenzy of despair and anger, even the use of the atom bomb was contemplated in certain quarters; and Attlee went post-haste to Washington to dissuade Truman from taking any such disastrous step. At that time there took place a conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London at which, thanks largely to the initiative of Nehru, a formula was devised for a settlement of the Korean question. It was accepted by the United Nations, including the USA. The USA. however, was determined to get China branded as an aggressor by the United Nations and succeeded in doing so. The result was that a war which could have been ended in a little over three months went on for a little over three years.

The principal responsibility for this rested on MacArthur. He was nothing if not dramatic. Eisenhower had served under him, and when asked what it was that he had learned best from MacArthur, replied: 'Dramatics,' The most dramatic moment in MacArthur's life came at the end of 1950 when he stood on the Yalu and looked across the river into China and those 'privileged sanctuaries' in Manchuria which, but for what he regarded as the pusillanimity of the United Nations, he would have bombed and thus set China and the world aflame.

All this has passed into history, but it has a lesson for the world; it shows how unsafe it is to entrust the policy of a war to soldiers. But the politicians, too, are to blame; it was they who authorized the soldiers to cross the 38th parallel. The advice given by Charles James Fox in similar circumstances in 1793 went unheeded; 'When we had put an end to the aggression, then was the time to put an end to the war, so commenced."

Peace came to Korea, but one man was still unreconciled to it 'The outrageous Syngman Rhee', said the Leonomist, has been indulging in gangster tactics and holding the UN to ransom.' He denounced the armistice as 'a shameful document' and in defiance of it released 25,000 prisoners of war. Dulles went post-haste to Korea to meet his 'very dear friend', Syngman Rhee, and signed a mutual defence pact with him. South Korea, said Dulles, was 'the show-window of Asian democracy'; American soldiers were 'missionaries of rehabilitation'; South Korea could be 'a strong pole of attraction' for North Korea; the first phase of 'the battle for peace with justice' was over, and its second phase could now begin. Truly, to quote R. L. Stevenson, man does not live by bread alone but by catchwords'.

INTERNAL RELAXATED

The new government brought considerable crelief to the diplomatic corps. The restrictions on travel were anodified; hitherto diplomats could move only within a radius of 25 kilometres without special permission to travel further. We were now free to travel not only in Russia proper but even in Central Asia, with the exception of some frontier regions. Moreover, contacts with Russians became easier; socially they were less aloof than before, though unending propaganda, from discipline and bitter experience had taught them to suspect every foreigner of being a potential spy.

Previously the most hard hit, and now the most relieved, of all the heads of missions were the British and the American. They were no longer tollowed by security men, who, in Stalin's time, used to dog their footsteps wherever they went. In front of the British and American embassies there used to be a car which picked up the security men and shadowed the ambassadors even if they were merely going for a drive to Gogol Park or Lenin Hill. Even in the Bolshoi theatre these men used to sit behind them. This was done ostensibly on the ground that the British and American ambassadors needed protection. Now this protection was withdrawn.

It was not only the diplomatic corps but the entire people of the USSR who experienced a feeling of relief. Beria, who

had been the head of the Secret Police for a number of years and, after Stalin's death, tried to carve out an imperium in imperio for himself, was arrested and eventually executed for his misdeeds. The Jewish doctors, to whose arrest a reference has already been made, were released and honourably acquitted of all the charges against them. Similarly, the reputation of the great Jewish actor, Michoels, who used to be an outstanding personality and suddenly disappeared in 1945, was re-established. Pravda welcomed his rehabilitation and extolled him as 'that honest public figure and Peoples' Artist who had been foully slandered'. The release of the doctors was made an occasion for expounding the Soviet theory of nationalities, based on the equality of all races and peoples in the Soviet Union. All officials were warned that any direct or indirect infringement of rights. or the grant of any favours or advantages to any citizens because of their racial affiliation, or any preaching of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred or scorn, is punishable by law. This constituted a clear warning against the recrudescence of anti-Semitism; and it paved the way for the resumption of diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Government admitted that the entire evidence on the basis of which the doctors were arrested was fabricated and that their confessions were extorted by illegal means. Mikhail Ryumin, the former Deputy Minister of State Security, who was in direct charge of the investigation, was arrested and prosecuted as 'a criminal adventurist and covert enemy of the Soviet State and people'. Semyon Ignatiev, former Minister of State Security, was severely censured and relieved of his post. The Government gave an assurance that it would strictly uphold the provisions in the Constitution of the USSR under which no one can be arrested except by the decision of a court or with the sanction of the procurator.

The Government's intention to make life less onerous for Soviet citizens was reflected in its budget. More emphasis was laid on the production of consumer goods. For a quarter of a century, the production of capital goods had been receiv-

ing paramount attention. This was necessary, for the total quantity of steel produced in the Soviet Union in 1925 was less than 2 million tons, coal 16½ million tons and electric power about 3 million kilowatts. In 1953 the figures for steel and coal were 38 million tons and 226 million tons, and for electric power 133 million kilowatts. But the Government realized that the time had come to give a kindly thought to the consumer. Since 1925, the production of capital goods had increased 55 times; consumer goods 12 times only. The people suffered untold hardships; ill-clothed and almost unshod, they reared the mighty industrial machine of the Soviet Union. The Government now called for the production of 'more meat, fish, butter, sugar, fabrics, clothing, footwear, utensils, furniture and household goods'.

Another important feature of the budget was the proposed relief for agriculturists. All arrears of agricultural taxes for the past years were remitted. The procurement prices of meat, wool, potatoes and vegetables, compulsorily delivered to the Government, were increased; and quotas to be delivered to the Government out of the farmers' personal produce were reduced. In the past, any possession of separate plots by individual farmers on collective farms was regarded as an encouragement to the private property instincts of the farmer and therefore detrimental to the development of a healthy communistic outlook. Now it was realized that the paramount need was to increase production specially in the agricultural field, and that this could not be done without giving sufficient incentives to the farmers.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Government's desire to reduce international tension was shown first of all in its relations with its neighbours. It renounced the long-standing claims of Georgia and Armenia to certain districts in Turkey. As for the long-standing border

dispute with Iran, a joint Commission of the Soviet Union and Iran was appointed to investigate the claims of both sides.

The Government also tried to improve relations with certain states which had been strained in Stalin's time. Ambassadors were exchanged with Yugoslavia and Greece after a long interval; and diplomatic relations were resumed with Israel. In his first speech on foreign policy at the Supreme Soviet on 8 August 1953, the Prime Minister regretted that the relations with the USA continued to be strained. Under the instigation of the USA, he said. Japan and Germany were being organized as springboards against the Soviet Union: and the cold war continued unabated. The cold war had entered even the region of sport. The refusal of the US Government to permit Soviet chess players to move outside the twelve-mile limit from New York was in striking contrast to the changed position in the Soviet Union where, said the Prime Minister, foreigners had been moving about over thousands of miles to Tashkent, Tiflis, Kiev and other places. 'How dare they prattle about the "Iron Curtain"?', he asked

The Prime Minister made it clear that the Soviet Union's policy was not due to the 'toughness' displayed by the USA; nor did it imply any weakness on the part of the Soviet Union. He recalled the fate of Hitler who made, and paid for, the terrible miscalculation of thinking that the Soviet Union was a 'colossus on feet of clay'. The removal of Beria, 'that double-dved agent of imperialism', was not an act of weakness either. The Soviet Union was now stronger and more invincible than ever before. The USA, said the Prime Minister, with its stock of atom bombs, at one time blackmailed the world. When the atom bomb ceased to be a monopoly of the USA, they started threatening the world with the hydrogen bomb. 'The Government considers it necessary to report to the Supreme Soviet,' said the Prime Minister dramatically, 'that the United States no longer has a monopoly of the production of the hydrogen bomb Towards the end of his speech, the Prime Minister referred to the German problem which, he said, 'must and can be settled', having regard to 'the security of the western and eastern neighbours of Germany and, at the same time, the national interests of the German people'. It was, however, futile for the Western powers to expect the Soviet Union to agree to the revival of an aggressive, militarist Germany under the pretext of safeguarding peace in Europe.

The Prime Minister reiterated the belief of the Soviet Government in the possibility of the peaceful co-existence of the communist and capitalist systems, and the desire of the Soviet Union to develop co-operative and business ties with other countries. He appreciated Eisenhower's words in his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 16 April that 'not a single one of the disputed issues, whether it be great or small, is insoluble, given the desire to respect the rights of all other countries'. But the deeds of the USA did not square with its words.

While listening to the Prime Minister's speech I was glad to hear him pay a notable tribute to India. 'The position of such a considerable state as India,' he said, 'is of great importance for the strengthening of peace in the East. India has made her own significant contribution to the efforts of peace-loving countries directed to the ending of the war in Korea. Our relations with India are growing stronger and cultural and economic ties are developing. We hope that relations between India and the Soviet Union will continue to develop and strengthen with friendly cooperation as their keynote.' This was the first occasion on which so friendly a reference to India, or indeed to any non-communist state, was made by a personage holding so important a position in the Soviet Union. It was greeted with applause in the Supreme Soviet.

FERMENT IN LITERATURE

In the Soviet Union, the Party has always insisted on the observance of certain standards in art and literature. The degree of insistence has varied from time to time. Realism is the guiding principle. Formalism and naturalism are frowned upon. When a writer pays more attention to form than content, he is said to be formalistic. He must also distinguish between realism and naturalism. To present men and things in a photographic way, without showing them against the wider background of social life, is to fall into the error of naturalism.

Maxim Gorki wrote that an author should portray man 'not only as he is today, but as he must, and will be, tomorrow'. An author may think that in describing men and things as they are, he is telling the truth, but, says Gorki, 'he ought to ask himself two questions: One, which truth? and the other, why? It is well known that two truths exist today and that in our world the vile and filthy truth of the past predominates quantitatively whilst, fatal to this truth, there has come into being, and is growing up, another truth. Nothing in the world is intelligible except in the context of the clash, the struggle of these truths.' To ignore these rival truths, which are striving for mastery, and to paint a rosy picture of society as if the conflict between these truths had already been solved is to subscribe to the no-conflict theory. It is not enough for an author to be a mere observer, photographer or panegyrist of Soviet society; he should be an active fighter in the cause of communism. As Vladimir Mavakovsky put it:

> The song, the verse are bomb and flag;

the singer's voice calls up a class;

FERMENT IN LITERATURE OF EQUENTY

and he
who today
sings not with us

he is against us.

The Communist Party and the Union of Soviet Writers have been vigilant in applying these criteria to all literary works, old and new, indigenous and foreign. During the war, however, when the immediate goal was victory over Hitler, not the dominance of international communism, there was a notable relaxing of standards. During those years Russian poets sang of the glories of the Russian homeland rather than of the achievements of communism.

When the war ended, the Party strove to restore communist principles in their pristine purity and international communism in its militant form. The Comintern now reappeared as the Cominform. The man who founded the Cominform, Zhdanov, also decided to harness the arts to the chariot of communism. A bitter ideological struggle was launched against the intrusion of foreign influences in art and literature. Writers were sternly reminded that they were expected to be in the forefront of this struggle. Art, science, literature, the cinema and the circus were enlisted in the cause of the

Party.

In some ways the Soviet attitude towards art and literature is healthier than in other countries. There is no pornography, no sadism, no undue display of sex. On the stage and on the screen sex is treated with a restraint which, according to one's taste, may be regarded as sublime or prudish. There are no horror comics, no murder thrillers, no 'gangsters of the pen and brush' making money by pandering to the meanest impulses of man. Authorship is regarded as a highly respectable profession. Russian writers enjoy good earnings and a wide public. Their books are translated into scores of languages and sold in hundreds of thousands of copies. The average writer is able to provide himself with such luxuries as a car and a dacha, both of which used to be beyond

the reach of the ordinary Soviet citizen.

It must be admitted, however, that the post-revolution period has produced few literary giants comparable to the great Russian writers of the 18th and 19th centuries. Why, asked *Pravda* once, are authors indifferent to the diversified seething life of contemporary Soviet society? Why does poetry fail to reflect 'the lovely and highly poetical reality which our Soviet people, led by the party of Lenin and Stalin, have created '? Perhaps the explanation is that literary genius is cramped by too many rules and regulations.

This began to be realized after Stalin's death, and there was considerable relaxation of political control. Realism was still the guiding principle, but the Party was willing to acknowledge the co-existence of other schools of art. A fine collection of French Impressionist paintings which had been tucked away from public view for many years was brought out and exhibited soon after Stalin's death. And plays tabooed in Stalin's time, such as Vladimir Mayakovsky's Vania, began

to be staged.

Some critics even began to write as if they subscribed to the theory of art for art's sake. Ilva Ehrenburg wrote an article in Znamva on the role of literature: An author writes a book not because he knows how to write, not because he is a member of the Union of Soviet Writers and may be asked why he has not published anything for so long. An author does not write a book because he has to earn a living. An author writes a book because he finds it necessary to tell people something of his inmost thoughts, because he is " sick " with his book, because he has seen people and things and felt emotions that he cannot help describing. In this way impassioned books are born.' Ehrenburg went on to say that he could not understand those critics who blamed a writer for not having written a novel about the struggle for peace, or the Volga-Don canal, or the textile industry. 'Statistics do not play in art the role they play in industrial production." Nor do collective farms. Krokodil, Russja's Punch, made fun of a film called 'Love on the Kolkhoz', thus:

A rural setting—boy meets girl,
His head's completely in a whirl.
He begs her soon to name the day,
But this is what she has to say:
'Unless your prowess in the field
Is much improved, I will not yield!'
Our young man's tough, he's got his pride,
He breaks the record, wins his bride.
The local Party chief's delighted,
And to the wedding he's invited
The wine is handed round, they drink,
And . . . that is all. (don't you think?)

Music, too, began to fret against the shackles imposed on it in the time of Stalin. In an article called 'Creative Boldness and Inspiration' in the magazine Soviet Music, Aram Khachaturyan made a spirited defence of Prokofiev, whom Zhdanov had condemned for his association with 'degenerate, blackguardly, anti-Russian lackeys of the Western bourgeoisie'. 'Prokofiev', wrote Khachaturyan, 'must be included among the very greatest Russian composers and one of whom the Soviet people have every right to be proud.' He went on to observe that in music 'the style counts as much as the content'. Socialist realism is well and good but 'revolutionary romanticism is also an essential part of our art. No good art is produced by cautious people who are constantly afraid of saying the wrong thing.' The works produced by such cautious people in accordance with the dictates of the Party were sometimes called monumental by the Composers' Union. 'One had to put up with them simply because they had some such title as Friendship between Nations. But in the end, life itself passes verdict on these works-they are thoroughly forgotten in no time.' Khachaturyan made a passionate plea for freedom to compose, without constant nagging from bureaucrats of the Composers' Union. 'No more of your guardianship! Let every composer do his work on his own responsibility; let us take a chance on it and let us allow our composers, orchestras and theatres to do as they think best, without all this petty

supervision.' 'Criticism-by all means,' he continued, 'but let us have no more directives from the bureaucrats, with their constant worry for being on the safe side. It is not the job of the Composers' Union to act as an infallible guide. as though music were a pawnshop. I even think that certain works that have been turned down by the Composers' Union should be printed and performed. Let time and the public judge.'

This ferment of ideas in the field of literature and art is perhaps best described by the title of Ehrenburg's book. The Thaw. Walter Lippmann said in 1953 that the need of the hour was to thaw frozen attitudes. In the Soviet Union, a thaw did set in both in politics and in art and literature. Beyond the thawing and melting, the snowing and icing, of revolutionary ideas, the poet Mayakovsky saw a vision and

exclaimed:

The Commune is a place from which officials will disappear

And where there will be many songs and poems.

This was still a distant vision, but there were people who dreamt of it and even gave words to it.

SOVIET AND INDIAN ART

In the first year of my stay in the USSR, a visitor from India was a rarity in the Soviet Union. In the latter half of 1953, however, there came from India an exhibition of Indian art consisting of reproductions from Ajanta and Ellora. Mogul and Rajput miniatures, and many specimens of modern Indian art.

When the proposal to bring such an exhibition to the Soviet

Union was first made I was a little nervous, because I was not sure how far Indian art would be appreciated there. In the Soviet Union the only style of painting which used to be encouraged or, indeed, tolerated, in Stalin's time was the realistic type. Many Indian paintings are realistic, but there are also many which are surrealistic, impressionist or idealist, taking one's thoughts away from this world into another world altogether, a world of mythology, a world of abstractions or a world to come. Would not the Soviet people, I wondered, be repelled by such pictures? And would Soviet artists not dub them as examples of bourgeois degeneracy?

My fears were set at rest within the first few days of the exhibition. It was immensely popular and won golden opinions from the Soviet world of art. Alexander Gerasimov, President of the Soviet Academy of Arts, recorded that it revealed to him 'a fairy-tale world, full of the inexhaustible elements of nature, constructive and destructive, beneficent and baleful'. He noticed 'the tremendous role played by female figures in Indian art and the profound humanistic understanding of love, inherent in the Indian people'. He admired the harmony of colours in the Indian paintings, never gaudy or loud but at once restrained and brilliant. Ioganson, Director of the Tretyakov Art Gallery, wrote an even more eulogistic article in Sovetskaya Kultura, in which he described Indian painting as 'a symphony in colours'.

So far as our embassy was concerned, the staging of the exhibition served a useful purpose. It extended our contacts with cultural and artistic circles in the Soviet Union. Soon after the arrival of the art delegation a dinner party we gave in their honour was attended by as many Russians as had graced with their presence any diplomatic party in Moscow hitherto. Amongst our guests were not only representatives of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but artists, authors and sculptors. Anujee arranged the dinner not on one long table but on a number of small tables, each for four or five persons, and this made the party

informal and intimate. We went from table to table, making the acquaintance of our guests and toasting them—a strenuous business, especially as we were using some large horns recently presented to us in Georgia for drinking their health. Towards the end of the evening, the party became distinctly convivial. Nalbandian, a fine artist, expressed his wish to do a portrait of Anujee; Gerasimov offered to paint Shaila; and Ioganson was in raptures over Devi's eyes which, he said, were 'black as night, bright as agate and soft as velvet'.

The Ministry of Culture gave a splendid banquet to our artists on the eve of their departure to Kiev. It lasted from 8.30 in the evening till 1.30 in the morning and was punctuated by a number of toasts, speeches, dances and even a juggler's performance. The star of the evening was Tamara Khanum, a most accomplished singer and dancer from Uzbekistan. She performed Chinese, Korean, Indian and Central Asian songs and dances with equal facility; and the lightning rapidity with which she changed her costumes was remarkable

It fell to me to reply to the main toast proposed by Ponomarenko, the Minister of Culture. I said how delighted I was that the exhibition was so great a success, but that I had had some misgivings at first. The Soviet Union specialized in and encouraged only one school of painting, the realistic school; our artists, on the other hand, did not belong to any particular school; they were a law unto themselves and would not follow any fixed rules or settled canons, they painted as the spirit moved them. To the Soviet authorities, I went on, this medley of paintings, compared with those of the Soviet Union, must have appeared chaotic; and yet they had extended their welcome to these paintings in the most generous measure.

Gerasimov took up my challenge and said that the Soviet people did not think that there was only one good way of painting. In the Soviet Union itself there were dozens of nations: and each nation had its own artistic tradition. Pointing to a vase, full of flowers, in front of him, Gerasimov

said that while the bouquet as a whole was beautiful, each flower too had a beauty of its own.

Ponomarenko, the Minister of Culture, took up the thread. He observed that art in the Soviet Union was essentially an art of the people. The Soviet artists were susceptible to various influences but they always distinguished good influences from bad, always subjecting themselves to the double process of criticism and self-criticism. Still, they were always ready to appreciate good art, whatever form it might take.

Evidently, my remarks had gone home. In replying, I said that in art, as in politics, India and the Soviet Union might follow different methods but in both spheres our goals were identical. In art our goal was beauty; and in politics, peace. And in the pursuit of beauty and peace India and the Soviet Union would stand together.

MILITARY AID AND AESTHETIC BARRAGE

Early in January 1954 I was surprised to find my photograph in *Time*. I wondered what I had done to deserve this honour. The photograph was an adjunct to an article saying that India was seething with fright and fury at the proposed defence pact between Pakistan and the USA. *Time* also stated that a knowledgeable source in New Delhi had vouched for the fact that the Government of India had instructed me to seek military aid from the Soviet Union. An equally complete fabrication was *Time*'s suggestion that India would receive camouflaged military aid under the recent Indo-Soviet trade agreement.

The defence pact between Pakistan and the USA did not fill India with fright or fury but rather with profound regret. Regret that the USA should have chosen to drive a wedge between two sister-states in a subcontinent which, though politically divided, had been trying to evolve a common outlook on international affairs. Regret that Pakistan should

allow herself to be drawn into the arena of the cold war and bring it to our own frontier. Regret, above all, that Western domination should creep in another shape into Asia which had almost shaken it off. Doubtless America's primary interest was to have bases in Pakistan from which she could strike at Russia's military installations in the Ural region and at China's in Sinkiang and elsewhere. Mohammad Ali, the Prime Minister, denied that Pakistan had any intention of giving bases to America. This was immaterial for, as Nehru pointed out, 'when military aid comes in, the whole country becomes a base; it is not a question of an odd base here and an odd base there, but the whole country can be utilized for other purposes, laid down by other countries and other people'.

While America was getting ready to take Pakistan under her military wing, she was, at the same time, alarmed at the cultural contacts which had been developing between India and the Soviet Union. These contacts were described in American papers in military terms. 'Soviet Bombards India with Art' ran the title of a report in the New York Times.' The Soviet Union's prolonged cultural offensive in India', said the article, 'will reach hitherto unscaled heights this month. The officially scheduled aesthetic barrage from Moseow promises to be comparable on the propaganda front to saturation bombing in conventional warfare.' What provoked these effusions was the proposed visit to India of a troupe of Soviet singers, musicians and dancers, including a rising ballerina who was being groomed to take Ulanova's place, Maya Plisetskaya.

I was glad to have an opportunity of entertaining the members of the troupe in our embassy before they left for India. After the dinner the Russians were in good humour and displayed their talents. Mikhailov sang in his glorious voice: so did the Leningrad sisters. Beibutov from Azerbaijan sang a Central Asian song and also an Indian song which he had learnt on his last visit to India. On our side, Savitri Das Gupta bravely faced the audience and sang a

couple of Bengali songs.

No party by or to Russians can be complete without toasts. I assured them in the course of my toast that a warm welcome awaited them in India. Some people, I said, had described their visit as a 'cultural invasion' of India. 'If only all invasions in the world,' I said, 'were like yours, the world would be a happier place to live in. Your invasion of India will be very different, shall we say, from the invasion of Korea? You will not leave behind you cities devastated, men killed, women widowed and children orphaned. But even you, I am afraid, may cause a few casualties. The ballerinas may leave a few wounded hearts behind!'

4 WAR AND PEACE

BRINKMANSHIP

Man's memory is short. Not many remember how often the world has been on the brink of war during recent years. One of the worst crises occurred during the sunset of French imperialism in Indo-China. This is described in the diaries written by me in April and May, 1954; and I propose to give some extracts from them in order to show the extent of the hopes and the fears, the triumph and the humiliation, the elation and the depression experienced by different people in different parts of the world. At the same time they form a background for the war which has flared up again in Vietnam.

11 April 1954.

Dulles is at his favourite game in the Far Fast, and the world is on the brink of war.

In Indo-China a local war has been going on for eight years and both sides are tired of it, the French more than the Viet Minh. The French have nothing to look forward to in Indo-China, whether they win or lose; their day there is over and they know it. They cannot, therefore, put their hearts into the war and are only anxious to wright out of it with such prestige as is still left to them. The Viet Minn armies, on the other hand, are guided by the shining star of independence. This is why a handful of Indo-China e have been able to stand up, for eight years, a must the French. Empire, which has been backed in the later. Cross by the mighty resources of America. Yet, Ho Ch. Mash has expressed his readiness to negotiate an honourable settlement.

with the French, and the French parliament itself has voted in favour of a settlement by negotiation. The British are hoping for wider consequences from a settlement in Indo-China: they were the first to recognize the new government of China and they are hoping that the Geneva conference will pave the way for its admission to the United Nations and for the removal of the ban on British trade with China. As for China herself, her present mood is expressed by Chen Yun, the spokesman of the Chinese Communist Party, who recently stated that 'an era of peace is indispensable for the consolidation of the Chinese revolution'.

Unfortunately the American appraisal is different. American eyes the movement in Indo-China is but part of the communist world-wide conspiracy. They ignore the fact that it was, and is, essentially a struggle against imperialism and that the war started even before the communists had established themselves in China. The Americans regard Ho Chi Minh as simply a tool of Moscow. In reality, however, he is a patriot who at one time was genuinely anxious to concede a measure of French influence in Indo-China. M. Jean Sainteny, who negotiated with him in Hanoi in 1946 and accompanied him to Fontainebleau, and who compared him with Mahatma Gandhi in his reluctance to use force, wrote that 'Ho Chi Minh is disposed to concede to France the care of those things which she holds most dear, her economic and cultural interests '. He also quoted Ho Chi Minh's invitation to the effect that 'if we wish to administer our own country and if I ask you to withdraw your administrators. I shall, at the same time, need your professors, your engineers and your capital to build a strong and independent Vietnam'. Unfortunately the French Government did not see the writing on the wall, as did the British in India and the Dutch, more tardily, in Indonesia. And France has been paying heavily for this failure.

The USA has decreed that France shall continue to pay, not in dollars but in men and in prestige. The American personnel have not, however, so far been involved. But

now the United States seems determined to take a more direct hand in the Indo-Chinese war.

The ground for this has been sedulously prepared during the last few weeks. A US Congress mission went to Indo-China in March and warned against 'a Munich appeasement' there. They said that any settlement in Indo-China which might lead to the recognition of China would be 'a smashing victory' for world communism and especially for the Chinese Republic. 'We must break Communist China,' said the mission.

Having thus prepared the ground, Dulles made a declaration of policy on 30 March. If communism were to be imposed on Indo-China, he said, the USA would consider it 'a grave threat to the whole free community'. This threat would not be passively accepted but would be met by 'united action', What Dulles has in mind is some kind of co-ordinated action. by the USA, England, France and the two Asian countries always susceptible to their advice, namely, Thailand and the Philippines. As the first instalment of united action, Dulles proposed that an ultimatum should be sent to China, warning her to keep her hands off Indo-China or to take the consequences. Neither the UK nor France is prepared to join in this ultimatum. Dulles is, therefore, reported to be flying post-haste to London and Paris in the hope of bringing these recalcitrant allies to heel. Whether he will succeed or not remains to be seen. Anyhow, with the prospect of intensification of the war in Indo-China, the prices of ting zinc and other strategic materials are looking up.

ON DOGS AND MEN

24 April 1954.

A couple of days ago we saw a grim film called Desert Rats. In it British soldiers are shown in the battle of North Africa, and particularly in the prolonged siege of Tobruk, living

underground like rats while fighting and dying. And today, Frenchmen, let alone Indo-Chinese, are fighting like dogs and dying by the thousand. This canine simile was used by the French Marshal Lattré de Tassigny, Commander of the French Forces in Indo-China. 'In this cruel war', he said, 'my soldiers have to live and fight comme des chiens.' War reduces men to the level of animals.

Since time immemorial man has spent a good deal of his energy in preparing for war, waging it, and licking his wounds after it. Our ancient epic, the Mahabharata, compares the warring world of men with a dog-kennel. 'First there comes the wagging of tails, then the bark, then the replying bark, then the turning of one round the other, then the show of teeth, then the roaring and then comes the commencement of the fight. It is the same with men; there is no difference whatsoever.'

There is, however, one difference between dogs and men.

Men hold conferences; dogs don't.

In two days' time representatives of the five great powers and the fifteen smaller ones who fought in the Korean war, in the name of the United Nations, will be assembling in Geneva in order to 'settle' the problems of Korea and Indo-China. All Asia welcomes this move. In order to create the proper atmosphere for this conference, Nehru has urged a cease-fire in Indo-China. In doing so he has the backing of most Asian countries; and his proposal has aroused lively interest in France. In other countries reactions have varied. England is polite and non-committal; America, cold and almost hostile; and the Soviet Union, completely indifferent. Molotov, to whom I explained the proposal on 13 March, showed little interest in it. All he said was that this was a matter for the parties themselves to decide. The result is that instead of a cease-fire in Indo-China, war is intensified; and the Viet Minh, presumably aided by China, has started making tierce onslaughts on Dien Bien Phu. This has provoked Dulles into a series of moves and declarations which have disturbed public opinion all over the world. Suddenly Indo-China has become a vital spot for the 'free world'; suddenly the repulse of communism in Indo-China has become a sacred duty.

While advocating 'united action', Dulles took the precaution of unilateral action by sending American air technicians to Indo-China, giving France B-25 bombers, transporting French supplies and troops in American planes and enabling Bao Dai to buy private armies with American dollars. Above all, he threatened China with 'massive mobile retaliation'. The possible consequences are shown in a cartoon, called 'The Last Man', by Vicky. The rest of mankind having been annihilated, the last man stands, watching the world in flames, and exclaims: 'We have saved Western civilization!' The important question is how Dulles's threat is viewed in China and Russia. Is it all a colossal bluff or does he mean business? If the former, says the Manchester Guardian, 'the Chinese would laugh in our faces; if the latter, it would set off the Third World War'. But even anticommunist bigotry cannot drive a nation which produced Lincoln and Washington to commit such a crime against humanity.

Such were my thoughts when I went off to bed last night. Hardly had I fallen asleep when I was roused by the chiming of bells for Easter. Church bells, ringing solemnly, pleasantly and persistently. Church bells reminding man of the Son of Man, who gave his life for humanity. But man, alas, still seems determined to live a dog's life.

THE EVE OF DIEN BIEN PHU

4 May 1954.

It looks as if Dien Bien Phu is about to fall. The 12,000 French defenders have no hope of escape. They are trapped there beyond redemption. Thousands of wounded are being huddled into an underground cellar, hardly big enough to

contain a hundred; and America, which egged them on to continue a hopeless fight, is writing articles on the heroism of 'the defenders of the free world'.

In Geneva the conference has made little progress. The protagonists are still at the stage of barking, barking back, and turning one on the other. Dulles, having had his growl in Geneva, is returning to the United States. He is finding himself in a tight corner: evidently his threat of 'massive mobile retaliation' has fallen flat. When the battle of Dien Bien Phu first reached a critical stage the French pleaded for British and American assistance. The British refused: and America would not go it alone.

In the meantime a conference of a very different nature has taken place in Colombo - a conference of the prime ministers of India, Burma, Indonesia, Ceylon and Pakistan. With no drums beating and no flags flying, without even a formal agenda, these five men of goodwill met for four days and took stock of the world situation and of the dangers threatening their region. They recommended that there should be an immediate cease-fire in Indo-China, that the parties directly concerned should get together and negotiate a settlement, and that France should irrevocably commit itself to the independence of Indo-China. They demanded that the national sovereignty of Morocco and Tunisia and their legitimate demands for independence should be recognized. They affirmed their faith in democracy and declared that they would oppose any intervention in their internal affairs by communist, anti-communist or any other agencies.

This was the voice of Asia. Europe, on the whole, recognizes it as such, but America continues to regard Bao Dai, Syngman Rhee and Chiang Kai-shek as the pillars of Asian

democracy.

LESSONS OF DIEN BIEN PHU

11 May 1954.

Dien Bien Phu has fallen. I heard the news with the same thrill of pride as, when a child, I heard of the defeat of Russia by Japan at Port Arthur. In both cases a small Asian nation showed that it was more than a match for a great European power. One only hopes that no Asian state will ever again

tread the path of imperialism, as Japan did.

While admiring the victorious Viet Minh, I am at the same time filled with sympathy for the defenders of Dien Bien Phu. The French forces fought with a courage and determination worthy of a better cause. Confined to a small area, bogged down by the monsoon, overwhelmed by weight of numbers and hampered by their own sick and wounded, whom they had no proper means of treating or evacuating, the French fought to the bitter end. Four thousand French soldiers lay dead and wounded on the battlefield and eight thousand were captured. What they died for, few of them knew.

In the hour of defeat, France is the recipient of much sympathy and some admonition. The admonition comes mostly from America. Time, that popular magazine which reflects the sentiments, passions and prejudices of the people of America, lays squarely on France the blame for the failure of the Indo-Chinese war. The United States, says Time, has hitherto proceeded on the assumption that France is a great power; it is now clear that this is a great mistake. The members of 'the shifting combination of shadows', called the Government of France, have no thought for anything except to stick in their places. In future the United States must go ahead in the knowledge that I rance does not count as a factor even for her own defence

Such is the reward that France has got for following a policy against her better judgement and at the behest of the United States, 'We lost the war', says Brisson in one of his rare, signed articles in Figaro, 'because we had neither the will to fight nor the will to refuse to fight.' The French soldiers themselves showed that they did have the will to fight, but it is true that the French Government lacked the will to refuse to fight a war in which France had no interest. moral or material. If only Dien Bien Phu rouses France to the dangers of following a subservient foreign policy, it will have served a useful purpose.

Dien Bien Phu has lessons for America too. The Government must now be realizing that there are certain limits beyond which it cannot go. 'Not all the noise made by Dulles in April,' says Tribuna Ludu, the Polish newspaper, 'nor his flights and forages across the Atlantic have frightened his opponents or given the slightest relief to the besieged garrison in Dien Bien Phu.' 'Colombus discovered America,' says another Polish paper, 'but Dulles discovered in Geneva the frontiers of America.'

Lyndon Johnson has yet to discover the frontiers of America, though the Vietnamese are valiantly helping him to do so.

5 'THE FRIENDSHIP OF GREAT PEOPLES'

THE USSR AS SLEN BY NEHRU IN 1927

The year 1955 was a landmark in the history of Indo-Soviet friendship. Jawaharlal Nehru paid a visit to the USSR in June 1955 and the Soviet leaders paid a return visit to India in November. This was commemorated in a magnificent Soviet film called *Drushba Velikih Narodov* (the friendship of great peoples).

This was Nehru's second visit to the USSR. His first visit was in 1927 to attend the tenth anniversary of the Revolution. At that time he was the *enjant terrible* of Indian politics; now he was the adored Prime Minister of the Republic of

India.

During the intervening period the USSR had changed out of recognition. In 1927, Moscow was still a city of droshkys. The droshky amused Nehru. The Revolution, he said, had changed many things, but not the droshky. Why anyone should use that primitive conveyance, a kind of four-wheeled rickshaw drawn by a horse, with room for one or two persons only and with a speed of not more than six miles an hour, passed his comprehension. By 1955, the droshky had disappeared. So had beggars; no longer were there any young women with 'babes in aims' to accost him as they did in 1927. Private shops had disappeared too. In 1927, the bigger shops were owned by the State and the smaller by individuals.

Lenin had been dead for barely three years, but he had already become a legend 'Lenin', wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, has become a mighty tradition not only in his native Russia but in the world at large. As time passes, he grows greater, he has become one of the chosen company of the world's

immortals. Petrograd has become Leningrad and almost every house in Russia has a Lenin corner or a Lenin picture. But he lives, not in monuments or pictures, but in the mighty work he did, and in the hearts of hundreds of millions of workers today who find inspiration in his example, and

the hope of a better day '.

In 1927, the Soviet attitude towards religion was wholly uncompromising. Nehru saw a large placard over St Basil's church bearing the words, 'Religion is the opiate of the people'. Although the true communist still regards religion as the opiate of the people he does not shout it from the church-tops; and St Basil's itself has been reverently renovated. On 7 November 1927, Nehru saw the effigies of Sir Austen Chamberlain, Briand and Baldwin burnt. One showed Chamberlain, wedged in a sickle, with the hammer falling on his head. Dulles, though a more sinister figure in Soviet eyes, escaped this fate.

In 1927, the Soviet Government had a somewhat naive attitude towards crime and punishment: crime was regarded simply as the result of environment; improve the environment and crime would disappear. Indeed, the governor of a rather dilapidated prison which Nehru visited told him that the Soviet Government had not been building any new jails because, with the regeneration of society which communism had been effecting, the need for jails would disappear. This has not come to pass. On the contrary, even the death penalty, which was abolished when the Soviets came to power, has been revived not merely for acts of treason but for certain other hemous offences.

All revolutions have proclaimed equality as one of their principal goals. In the capitalist States, this means no more than equality of opportunity, but in Communist Russia it meant more. The goal of communism is: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.' That goal, however, is still far away. The slogan still is: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his work.'

A permanent result of the Revolution has been the

emancipation of women. Nehru refers in his book to the libel, prevalent in those days, that the communists had nationalized women. It is true that the marriage tie tended to become lax after the Revolution; Nehru was told that one hundred thousand unmarried couples were living together in 1927. The question then was whether these marriages should be legalized or not, and there was much discussion regarding the proper role of sex in society. Nehru refers to an eminent professor, a sort of Russian Gandhi, who led a movement which laid down that continence should be the rule and that the sexual act should only be indulged in for the sake of procreation. This professor, like Gandhiji, was opposed to birth control. At the other extreme stood men who advocated the 'glass of water' theory about sex, according to which the satisfaction of the sex impulse is something as simple and inconsequential as the drinking of a glass of water. Lenin poured scorn on the theory. 'Certainly', he said, 'thirst must be satisfied. But does a normal person in normal conditions lie in the street and drink from a muddy pool? Or even from a glass which dozens of other people have been drinking from?" But at the same time he opposed asceticism in sex: We want neither monks nor Don Juans, nor yet the German Philistine as the happy medium.' Today the Russian attitude towards sex is healthier than in almost any other country in the world.

In 1927 the West regarded communist Russia as almost an outlaw, which spurned all the values on which civilization rested. Great Britain was the leader of the crusade against her. Nehru wrote that British policy was to encircle Russia by pacts and alliances and ultimately to crush her. He referred to a book written by 'Augur', a well known spokesman of the British Foreign Office, which stated candidly that the League of Nations and the Locarno Pact were the expressions of a desire to combat Bolshevism. 'It is the rigidity of the British Government', wrote Augur, 'which builds up the wall of a United Europe against the Soviet Union.' Substitute the word 'American' for 'British', and the

attitude described by Augur in 1927 was applicable to the post-war world. With, however, one difference. In 1927 the question was whether communism could survive the hostility of the Western world; now the question was how the West could stand up to communism. 'Russia', wrote Lenin, 'will either go under or move ahead full steam.' In 1927 Nehru noted that Russia had not gone under; and in 1955 he saw how she was moving ahead full steam.

NEHRU IN RUSSIA IN 1955

Nehru's visit to the USSR in 1955 was the crowning act of rapprochement between India and the USSR. Before independence India and the USSR had been all but strangers. With India's independence, and particularly after Stalin's death, a new chapter opened in Indo-Soviet relations. The cultural barrage, to which reference has been made in an earlier chapter, continued unabated. Between 1953 and 1955, numerous Soviet delegations went to India and vice versa. One of the most delightful Indian delegations was a troupe of Indian dancers, singers and musicians who came in the summer of 1953. After a performance at the Bolshoi theatre, which was attended by all the members of the Presidium, the troupe was entertained to a midnight supper in one of the anterooms of the Bolshoi. There, Bulganin made an impressive announcement. 'We have just taken a decision', he said, 'to build in India a large metallurgical plant producing one million tons of steel. It will be a powerful symbol of our friendship'.

It was more than a symbol of Indo-Soviet friendship. It was a symbol of a new era, not merely in India, but in Asia and Africa. For three centuries, during what Sardar Panikkar called the Vasco da Gama era, Asians and Africans had been treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It was their role to supply raw materials to the rich nations of the

West who manufactured them, exported them at enormous profits and thus became richer. Even after Asian states began to become independent, it was feared that this pattern of economic relationship would persist. This was broken once and for all when the Soviet Government came forward with an offer to put up a steel plant in Bhilai with an initial capacity of one million tons, to be extended to 2.5 million, on unprecedentedly favourable terms. At first it was difficult for Western newspapers to believe that such an offer could have been made or accepted. The London Times correspondent in New Delhi wired that 'a snap decision' was taken in the Indian Cabinet the previous day to request the Soviet Government to put up a steel plant. Subsequent events showed that it was by no means a snap decision but the beginning of a well-considered policy to establish and promote economic collaboration between India and the USSR.

Jawaharlal Nehru arrived in Moscow on 8 June and had a truly regal reception. During the first three days of his stay in Moscow, there were a number of official functions, and he had to make a number of speeches. He left the Soviet Government in no doubt as to where India stood in her foreign policy.

By far the most solemn statement of policy made by Nehru was at the banquet given by the Soviet Prime Minister in the Kremlin and attended by a distinguished gathering which included all the Heads of Missions in Moscow. The Kremlin had never before been used for such a function since the war, and rarely since the Revolution. In his speech, he explained the basic philosophy on which India's policy, internal as well as international, was based. A few sentences taken almost at random from his speech at the Kremlin on 10 June illustrate this: 'People who work for peace must create an atmosphere for peace.' Sometimes it seems to me that while some people talk of peace, their accents sound rather warlike.' Russia is a great country; and along with greatness goes responsibility. No doubt Russia will use her strength

with a sense of responsibility so as to further peace.' We think the right approach will, at some time or other, bring the right results.' We have no enemies in the world; we want to be friends with all.' This makes sad reading today. We still want to be friends with all, but, alas, we can no

longer say that we have no enemies.

Nehru's voice reached not only the Soviet Government and the elite of society, but the masses. This was the first occasion on which a non-communist statesman was given facilities to address them. On the last day of his stay Nehru addressed a gathering of about a hundred thousand people in the Dynamo Stadium. Here again he expounded the basic philosophy of India and her keen desire for friendship with

the Soviet Union.

After three strenuous days in Moscow, Jawaharlal Nehru proceeded on a tour of the Soviet Union. He covered about 10,000 miles in 10 days. He had glimpses of the Republics of Georgia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan. Uzbekistan and a number of places in the Russian federation including the Tartar Republic. Wherever he went, there were large crowds to greet him. At the University on Lenin's Hill, the students left their classes and gave him a great ovation. He said a few words to them and was greeted with loud applause when, referring to the bigness of the Soviet Union and of India, he remarked that what counted was not bigness in size, but bigness of heart.

In the Crimea, he had a flowery welcome. From Simferopol to Yalta, a distance of some 120 kilometres, it was flowers, flowers all the way. Villagers and townsfolk lined the streets with large bouquets and flung them into his car. Often the car had to be emptied of them. 'Flowers are good.' Bulganin said, 'but not when they are flung at you.' But Nehru seemed to enjoy catching the vaulting bouquets of roses from his moving car. The security attendant provided by the Soviet Government stood in front, warding off the floral attacks as best as he could. Once or twice, while warding off an attack from the right, one would come from the left and

hit him full in the face. V. V. Kuznetsov, the first Deputy Foreign Minister, who accompanied us throughout, hurt his fingers, which bled a little, while trying to catch the bouquets. 'Today,' he said, 'I have shed blood in the cause of Indo-

Soviet friendship.'

In the Asian republics of the USSR the welcome extended to Nehru was truly Asian in its joy, pride, excitement and confusion. There, as in Georgia, the sight of his daughter, Indira, standing by her father's side and waving to the people, sometimes for a whole hour or more, filled the people with admiration. I saw a romantic-looking Georgian running by the side of the car for two or three furlongs just in order to present a bouquet to her; and having succeeded in his mission, being carried off on the shoulders of his admiring comrades. How great a strain all this must have been for Indira, let alone for the Prime Minister! Yet Indira, who so graciously discharged a public duty for the sake of her country, leaving her children to themselves during the vacation, had to pay her own passage on Air India International. Financial righteousness can go no further.

For many months the ground had been prepared sedulously for the Prime Minister's visit. All the important statements he made prior to his visit were published in the Soviet papers. Ogonek, a weekly, carried a sketch of his life, together with a full-page photo. An exhibition of Indian art and culture was inaugurated in Moscow three days before his arrival. The Russian translation of his book. The Discovery of India, was published just before his arrival and was eagerly snatched up by the public. 'Nehru' had become a household word by the time he set his foot in the Soviet Union.

It would be wrong, however to attribute the success of his visit merely to the efficiency of the Party machine. The reasons he deeper. To the Soviet people, Nehru was not only the architect of Indian independence but a herald of peace. To them, steeped in the philosophy of dialectical materialism, Mahatma Gandhi was a holy puzzle; Jawaharlal Nehru was easier for them to under tand. What they admired

was that not only did he win India's independence, but he was determined to protect it against all threats and blandishments. During the first few months of my appointment the name 'Nehru' evoked no special response. That was when the Soviet Government viewed the world in terms of black and white, communist and non-communist. Now it was recognized that the world is multicoloured, that grey has a virtue of its own, and that to attempt to force the whole world communist might, in this atomic age, be to destroy it. The unprecedented welcome to a non-communist statesman was a spectacular affirmation of the Soviet Government's belief in peaceful coexistence.

NEHRU'S TALKS WITH SOVIET LEADERS

Nehru spent many hours in talks with the Soviet leaders. His visit took place on the eve of the summit conference in Geneva. At his first meeting with Nehru, Prime Minister Bulganin flourished a message, which he had just seen, reporting Dulies's press conference about the proposed Four Power meeting, and waxed hot about the cavalier way in which the agenda had been prepared. Far-Eastern issues had been omitted from the agenda altogether while the problems of Eastern Europe and international communism had been included. America was still insisting on talking from a position of strength. Was it any use, asked Bulganin, to try to talk to such people?

'I don't see,' replied Nehru quietly, 'why a strong man should always go about showing his muscles.' He went on to expatiate on American policy how uncertain it was, how liable to be swaved by lobbies and elections, and how quickly the Americans got excited about things and after a time forgot all about them. He also drew attention to some of the more hopeful features in America such as the recent eclipse of McCarthy and Knowland, the differences between

Dulles and Eisenhower and the slightly more conciliatory outlook of the latter. He concluded by saying that right steps taken by a government would, at some time or other, yield right results, and congratulated the Soviet Government on the right steps which they had recently taken in Austria, in Yugoslavia and over the disarmament question. All this had a reassuring effect on Bulganin; it was truly a case of the soft word turning away wrath. It was India's voice, the voice which Nehru himself thus described in the course of his speech in the Kremlin: 'Ours is not a loud voice. We speak in a soft, gentle voice because that is the tradition of India'

At first the Soviet leaders were not inclined to expect much from the coming Four Power conference. Khrushchev expressed the view that the real motive of the United Kingdom, and especially of the USA, in agreeing to a conference was to assist the Conservatives to win the election in Great Britain Kaganovich added that the USA had been laying down conditions on the holding of the conference and that the UK always toed the American line. France, said Mikoyan, was in greater need of peace than any other country, but she was weak and nobody cared for her.

Nehru conceded that the British elections might have had something to do with the agreement to hold a Four Power conference. He also admitted the existence of a number of factors which militated against its success. But he pointed out that there were some forces at work in the opposite direction even in the USA; and the problem was how to strengthen the forces in favour of peace. The UK might seem to be following the USA all the time, and yet the Geneva conference on Indo-China showed that on occasions the UK and even France were capable of striking out a line of their own. The Prime Minister recalled that Ernest Bevin had remarked on one occasion, 'After all, if Europe cannot get on without America, America cannot get on without Europe either.' Nehru went on to say that he had just received an invitation from Eden to visit London before returning to India. In his message Eden had remarked that the prospects for peace were now better than ever since the end of the war. Therefore, said Nehru, the Soviet Government had no reason to fear that they would find themselves isolated at Geneva. The UK and France might throw their weight in favour of peace; and Eisenhower himself was in a more receptive mood than Dulles. Of course no miracles or quick results could be expected from the conference, but personal contacts and informal talks at the conference might pave the way for positive results.

Khrushchev agreed with much of what Nehru said. Nevertheless he thought that there were two elements in the USA which were irreconcilably opposed to the advent of peace. One was big business; and the other, militarism. Big business had no thought of anything but profit; and the militarists were bent on the suppression of communism. Unfortunately, said Khrushchev, the American people had had no real taste of war. In two world wars the battle had been carried to the heart of Europe but America had remained immune. In reply, Nehru admitted that profit might be playing a role in the making of policies in America. This very motive, however, inclined some persons to the cause of peace. They knew that more, and more enduring, profits could be got out of trade than out of war. For this reason, that very influential paper, the Wall Street Journal, had recently been pressing for the removal of the restrictions on trade with China. As for the militarists, some were sensible enough to see that, whatever had been the cose in the past, the range of modern warfare was so great that America could no longer hope to remain safe.

This cool analysis of the international situation had a visible effect on the Soviet leaders. They became slightly more hopeful of achieving something at Geneva. They also agreed that the Prime Minister's visit to London might serve a useful purpose, 'It would be a good thing for the world,' said Bulganin, 'if the West would understand you as much as we do.'

From Moscow Nehru proceeded to London and, in his

talks with British statesmen, faithfully conveyed to them his impressions of the great developments which were taking place in the Soviet Union. There followed the summit conference at Geneva, where an earnest effort was made to reduce international tensions. Subsequently the British Foreign Secretary told Mrs Vijayalakshmi Pandit, our High Commissioner in London, that throughout the conference, the British representatives were guided by Nehru's assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union.

THE SOVIET LEADERS IN INDIA

In November 1955, the Soviet leaders, Bulganin and Khrushchev, paid a visit to India. I accompanied them on their hurricane tour of India from Kashmir to Combatore and from Bombay to Calcutta. It was also a comprehensive tour. From Delhi, dry and cool, and the Punjab, even drier and cooler, they flew into the sweltering heat of Bombay. Thence we took them higher and higher, to Poona. 2000 feet above sea-level, to Bangalore, 4000 feet high, and to Ootacamund, 8000 feet high, where the crisp air refreshed and reinvigorated them. From Ootacamund they made the precipitous descent to Coimbatore and were charmed by the coconut. areca-nut and banana groves they saw on the way. There followed the hottest and most tiresome part of their journey: Madras, Calcutta and Rangoon. Finally, they went to Kashmir. There they saw the snow, discarded their bush-shirts, donned their fur coats and felt at once at home and nostalgic for their own Central Asia, as Babur once did when he saw a caravan arriving in Lahore from Kabul.

The biggest function in Delhi was the great public meeting on the Ramhla grounds. Here the Soviet leaders were greeted by 500,000 people against the 100,000 which greeted Nehru in the stadium in Moscow. But this was nothing compared with the three million people who turned out in Calcutta.

where it looked as if a vast sea of humanity had suddenly overflowed into the city, setting all police arrangements to naught. Confusion ensued; the car of the distinguished visitors broke down, and they had to be taken unobserved in a closed police van to the safety of Raj Bhavan. The human sea continued to seethe and surge, with the result that none of the four hundred guests, who had been invited for a banquet at Raj Bhavan that evening, could find their way to it. It was not until after midnight that the crowds returned, disappointed, to their homes, only to rise the next morning and take their places at a public meeting which was addressed by Nehru as well as by the Soviet leaders.

What was the explanation for this tumultuous enthusiasm? To some extent, the novelty of the spectacle. To some extent, reciprocity. The film of Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union had been shown everywhere in India, and the people were determined that they should not seem less enthusiastic in welcoming the Soviet leaders. Moreover, among the common folk, there was a vague feeling that somehow the Soviet Union stands for the common man. Above all, the people of India saw in the Soviet Union a friend—and a friend who, to all appearances, demanded nothing from them except

friendship.

In this respect the Soviet Union seemed different from the USA. The USA, too, was a friend, but a rather jealous friend, almost a possessive lover who was out to grapple India to his heart with hoops of steel. But India was not prepared to lend herself to this steely embrace. Affronted, the USA turned to Pakistan, cast its mantle over her and enticed her with offers of military aid. Indeed the US Government announced on the very day of Bulganin's arrival in India that it was going to spend 20 million dollars on the construction of airfields in Pakistan. Moreover the Western powers inveigled Pakistan into such organizations as SI-ATO and the Baghdad Pact, which India had refused to join; and thus, as Krishna Menon said in the United Nations, gave India a sense of encirclement. In this situation it was

natural for India to feel glad that she had other friends, powerful but less exacting, whose only concern was that India should continue to tread the neutral, independent path which the had chalked out for herself.

6 THE PROGRESS OF COEXISTENCE

A KREMLIN BANQUET

I ALWAYS look back on a banquet at the Kremlin on 28 July 1954 as marking the high-water mark of peaceful co-existence. It was a sequel to the Geneva conference on Indo-China. 'Today, after many years,' said Nehru on 22 July, 'there is no war in any part of the world.' For the first and only time, since the Second World War, the representatives of China, Great Britain, the USA and the USSR had sat around the table and thrashed out a settlement and appointed a Commission, with India at its head, to bring about peace and unity in Indo-China. The hopes roused by that settlement were reflected at the banquet given by the Soviet Government in honour of Chou En-lai, the Prime Minister of China, and Pham Van Dong, the Deputy Prime Minister of North Vietnam. No one suspected that the relations between the Soviet Union and China or between China and India would begin to turn sour even before the decade was over.

The banquet was attended by all the members of the Presidium and almost all the heads of Missions and was spread out in a number of rooms. After all the guests had arrived, Molotov book Chou Lindat. Pham Van Dong and the members of the Plesidium to one of the anterooms to dine. There I was invited to ioin them, together with Rolf Sohlman, the Swedi in Arabassador and dozen of the diplomatic corps, and the Butish Chinese and Indonesian Arabassadors. Abused is a socied next to Chou Linda and I sat between her and Sabas a Throughout the dinner Chou Lindau kept tip an annumbed conversation with Anuree and spoke enthance it will about his recent visit to India.

Molotov, conscious of his triumph at Geneva, was in excellent form. The banquet went on till after midnight and was punctuated by numerous toasts. Molotov's first and second toasts were to Chou En-lai and Pham Van Dong respectively.

In replying, Chou En-lai said he was going to speak in his broken English because he wanted his words to reach the British Ambassador direct. We had here, said Chou En-lai, three representatives of the West, namely the British and Swedish Ambassadors and the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament. There were also three representatives from Asia, namely the Ambassadors of China, India and Indonesia. In between these two regions stood the Soviet Union which belonged as much to Asia as to Europe. How wonderful it would be, he said, if all these countries could co-operate with one another!

Khrushchev made an impassioned plea for peaceful co-existence. He said that it was absurd for people to say that the Soviet Union was out to dominate the world. How could the Soviet Union, with its 200 million, dominate China with its 600 million, or, for that matter, India with its 400 million? No, the Soviet Union was not out for domination, but for

peace, and she would defend peace to the death.

Throughout the banquet, Chou En-lai effused charm, so much so that I wrote an article in my diary under the title, Chou En-lai the Charmer. 'Chou En-lai,' I wrote, 'has left an agreeable impression on my mind. This is the second time that I have met him. Our first meeting was in Chungking. at the end of 1945, at the time when General Marshall was making a desperate attempt to form a coalition government of both communists and Kuomintung. I was not able to observe him as closely then as I could now. On seeing him again my first thought was how young he looks. He is the same age as myself, but while I am 56 years old, he seems 56 years young. There is not a grey hair on his head! His hair is jet black, rather like Malenkov's, but while Malenkov's straggles carelessly over his forehead. Chou's is brushed beautifully back, and each hair remains in its place - like

every individual in the great body politic of which he is Prime Minister. His eyes are jet black, too, and his smile is irresistible, especially when it was consciously directed at the lovely Lady Hayter. His manners blend Confucian dignity with Parisian gaiety; the gaiety showed itself at Molotov's party; and the dignity, at his own. Also, he is a master of words: his words addressed to the British Ambassador, in broken but graceful English, showed that he knew exactly what to say, how to say it, and whom to propitiate. Altogether, he strikes me as a man of ability, charm and resourcefulness. Here is the builder of a brave new world and the destroyer of an old, and yet a man with 2500 years of Confucian civilization behind him. Confucius, however, is being debunked in China; and that is not a good omen'.

No one, however, suspected how ominous this sign was

going to be.

CROSS-CURRENTS

There is a tide in the affairs of a man. In 1954 and 1955, the tide seemed to be flowing steadily and almost majestically towards peaceful co-existence. One man, however, was determined to row against the tide, namely, John Foster Dulles. He was exasperated by the rejection of the European Defence Community by the French Parliament. The final debate on the EDC in the French Parliament was marked by stern realism. Jules Moch exclaimed: 'What is the use of a few German divisions when fifteen thermonuclear bombs would be enough to annihilate the whole French population? In this terrible dilemma, the option is to disarm, or, if war breaks out, to perish.' Herriot observed that a reunited Germany would be free to resign from the EDC but France would be perpetually tied to it. To Germany the FDE was > a leap forward; to France it was a leap backward. And o after two years of vacillation the French Parliament rejected the EDC by 314 votes to 269.

Though this result was not unexpected, it came as a stunning blow to the USA. Eisenhower said it was 'a serious set-back', and Dulles called it 'a tragedy'. It resulted in a personal tragedy, too. De Gasperi, one of the foremost advocates of a Federal Western Europe, on hearing the news spent the night in agony, collapsed the next morning, and died.

Dulles was the chief mourner at the passing of the EDC, and his sorrow was equalled by his chagrin. Without waiting for the obsequies to be completed he flew off to Manila in the hope of forming a South-East Asian Pact and redressing, in Asia, the balance of Europe. Asia, however, was in no mood to oblige. The great countries of South-East Asia India, Burma and Indonesia — declined to take part in the Manila conference. And Nehru reflected on the oddity of people who were bent on 'protecting' others even when the others did not want protection and cried out against it.

If the Geneva conference on Indo-China had any lesson it was that the voice of Asia could no longer be ignored. There is no one, said Walter Lippman, so crazily ignorant of the reality of things as the American who wants to have all Asia and Europe say "Yes, Sir," when we speak, and feels deeply hurt, when they don't. The proud, newly independent nations of South-East Asia will not and cannot be compelled. The beginning of wisdom is to realize this."

ALSTRIA GAINS INDIPENDENCE

Despite the cross-currents described in the list of a not the Soviet Government continued to do excisting in its pool is to reduce in martinal tersion. The replacement of Malen-kov by Bulgaria as Pric. Minister note no difference it its foreign policy. Machanical removal was due primarily to serious differences over cutotral policy such as the role.

of heavy industry vis-a-vis consumer goods, the methods of

improving agriculture, etc.

In May 1955, Dr Julius Raab, the Chancellor of Austria, visited Moscow; and Austria gained its independence. What 228 meetings of the deputies of the four Great Powers failed to accomplish, was achieved at a couple of direct talks between the Austrian Chancellor and the Soviet Prime Minister in Moscow. It was Austria's full acceptance of neutrality which enabled her to obtain independence.

There was a general feeling that the diplomatic corps as a whole should celebrate the event by giving a dinner to Norbert Bischoff, the Austrian Ambassador and one of the seniormost diplomats in Moscow, whose own contribution to the independence of his country was notable. The suggestion emanated from the octogenarian Ambassador of Mexico and had the support of his Argentine colleague and e' all Asian diplomats, including Pakistan. I gave a tea party to some heads of Missions to discuss this. Wauters, the Belgian Ambassador, observed that the first step should be to consult the representatives of the NATO powers, as they migh have something to say about it. Wauters was commissioned to do so and reported yesterday that none of them was in favour of the proposal. They liked Bischoff but they felt that such a function would have political implications. What political implications, I asked, except that we all rejoiced in the independence of Austria? Wauters replied that the ments or dements of neutrality were involved, and that there much be speeches embarrassing to the Western representatives I could not help thinking that the Western powers were not wnolls reconciled to the neutrality of Austria

The Soviet leaders seemed prepared to accept even a comnertic State as a neutral in search of peace. Yugoslavia, which broke away from Soviet heremons and was expelled from the Commit in 1948, and which was consequently before courted and aded by the Western powers, was now in the solid article of the Soviet Government. It was an sourced to the above powered mission consisting of Khrusheleev. Bulganin, Mikoyan and others would proceed to Belgrade soon to confer with President Tito and his advisers. Thus the co-existence of two Europes, following different social systems, was to be facilitated, and their collision averted,

by a belt of neutral states.

Perhaps the Soviet Government envisaged Germany, too, as a link—the most important link—in this belt. The two sentiments which are most deeply rooted in non-communist Europe are the traditional French fear of Germany and the irresistible German desire for unity. Neither had been met by NATO. Both could perhaps have been met by the creation of a neutral Germany.

THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE

Ever since the Geneva conference on Indo-China, there had been, despite contrary forces, a progressive improvement in international relations. Of this, the conference of the four heads of government in Geneva in July 1955 was the chimax. True, it settled no problems, nor could it be expected to settle any during the six days for which it met. On the German question, the most thorny problem in Europe, there was still no meeting-point between Russia and the West. The Eden plan for the unification of Germany was far removed from the Molotov plan for collective security in Europe Moreover, the explosive problems of the Ear East and South-Last Asia were not discussed, at any rate in public. Nevertheless the conference was hailed in Moscow as a success, marking the end of the cold war and beralding the dawn of a new era.

The fact is that it was the first gentlements conference to be held since Potsdam. The true quality of a gentleman is that he does not cause his opponent to lose face. At former conferences, such as the one in Berlin in the pressous winter, the main and almost the sole concern of the protagonists.

seemed to have been to cause as much loss of face to the other side as possible. At Geneva no attempt was made by either side to belittle the other, to impugn its good faith or to hold it up to contempt and ridicule. 'Bouquets, not brickbats' was the motto at Geneva. Eisenhower was in good form; his words to Zhukov as 'from soldier to soldier' had an excellent effect, and Bulganin at once gracefully

acknowledged his sincerity.

Why, it may be asked, did the leading statesmen of the world suddenly decide to play the gentleman towards one another? The answer is that they had come to realize that bluff and brusqueness do not pay. Indeed, in the atomic age such conduct may prove to be dangerous and even suicidal. The possession of the hydrogen bomb by the USSR as well as by the USA has made it impossible for either party. or any other party, to resort to war without destroying itself and civilization. When asked what weapons would be used in the next war, Einstein said: 'I do not know what weapons will be used in the next war, but in the next war but one man will be fighting with bows and arrows.' War as an instrument for furthering diplomacy has become obsolete; and co-existence takes on a new meaning and a new urgency. It is no longer a luxury but a necessity, for without it civilization cannot survive. The Geneva conference was a great experiment in gentlemanly co-existence at the summit.

ADENAUER IN MOSCOW

Perhaps the most adroit of all the moves made by the Soviet Government was its invitation to Adenauer to visit Moscow He arrived in Moscow on 9 September 1955. A protagonist of the policy of strength, he seemed to enjoy displaying the resurrected strength of Germany to the Soviet Union. His arrival by plane was preceded by a German train, a veritable chancellery on wheels, carrying a hundred and fifty advisers

and officials. His first utterances were remarkable for their strength. He denounced the division of Germany as 'abnormal—against human and divine law and against nature'. He asserted that without a solution of the problem of German prisoners the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union was 'unthinkable'. Yet within less than a week he agreed to the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union without gaining anything in return except a pious platitude about German unity and a verbal offer to release some 9000 German prisoners, rather less than one-tenth of his own estimate.

In the conversations which took place on these subjects, the Russians proved more than a match for the Germans. Adenauer began by claiming to speak on behalf of the entire German people: he dismissed the East German Government as a regime with no popular backing. The Russians dissented from this view. They pointed out that the East German Government was a fact, as solid as West Germany itself. Indeed Khrushchev went further and described the East German Government as 'the future and not only of the German people'. In his own blunt way he posed the problem thus; you, he said, have a capitalist system and we have a socialist system. We do not support your system, nor do you support ours. But we live together in this world, on the same planet. That is why we must seek some points of contact. That is why we seek to establish diplomatic relations with you . . . 'You,' Khrushchev said, 'belong to NATO. We do not like NATO for we know that it is spear-headed against us. NATO is not a sports organization, nor is General Gruenther engaged in training football teams. He is training teams for war. West German participation has strengthened NATO. We know that we cannot detach you from NATO now. But do you think that we shall allow NATO to be further strengthened by letting all Germany go into it? No! You would not do it if you were in our position. Do not ask for more than we can give.'

The conversations on the German prisoners-of-war were

even more lively. Adenauer put the problem on a human plane. It is ten years since the war was over, he said, and these men have been in captivity for a long time. It is time to let bygones be bygones. After all, the German people suffered as much as anyone else in the last war; and when the Russian Army entered Germany, many horrible things happened. Khrushchev at once objected to this remark. It is an insult', he said. 'Who is to blame?' he asked.' We did not cross the border. It was not we who started the war. The Soviet Army merely discharged the sacred duty of defending the Motherland.'

Bulganin denied that there were any war prisoners in Russia. They had 9626 war criminals and that was all. These men had been convicted by the courts for acts of the uttermost ferocity. The Soviet people could not forget the machine-gunning of 70,000 innocent citizens in Kiev; the tons of hair shorn off the heads of tortured women and stocked at Belsen and Oswiecim; the 5½ million human beings, shot, throttled and burnt alive in concentration camps.

Thus there seemed to be no meeting-point between the two sides on either German unity or the German prisoners. On 12 September it looked as if the conversations were on the point of breaking down. Adenauer ordered his plane to be ready to take him back to Bonn the next morning and the London Times observed that 'everything said until now will reinforce the view that the Russians expected few immediate or tangible results from Adenauer's visit. They knew that they could not shake the Chancellor.'

Yet that very evening, the Chancellor was shaken. Fogether with all heads of Missions who had diplomatic relations with West Germany, I attended a dinner in the Kremlin in honour of the Chancellor. In reply to a brief toast by Bulganin, Adenauer made a significant remark: 'An important and useful talk', he said, 'has just been conducted in your presence.' How significant it was we did not realize till the next day. Apparently, at the dinner table, Khrushichev said that means might be found for the return of the German

prisoners; and Adenauer replied that in that case it would not be difficult to establish diplomatic relations. This agreement was subsequently incorporated in a communiqué.

What induced Adenauer to come to terms with the Soviet Union? The fact is that a settlement with the Soviet Union accorded with Germany's national interest. Hitherto Adenauer had seen the Soviet Union through Western, and particularly American, eyes. He had imagined it, as another German, Bismarck, had said, to be a 'Colossus on feet of clay', which had over-reached itself and was already shaking with unbearable economic and financial strains. All that the West had to do was to hold on firmly for another year or two, and the Soviet fabric would crack up, and the whole of Germany, including the region beyond the Oder and Neisse rivers, would fall into his lap. Adenauer's visit to Moscow, brief as it was, cured him of this illusion. His pronouncements about the Soviet Union on his return to Bonn were in a very different vein and it was evident that he was impressed with the might and the power of the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders were of course double-dyed communists, and Germany belonged, and would continue to belong, to the 'Christian Western world', but Adenauer at least acknowledged that the Russians, for reasons of their own, were genuinely desirous of peace. Of Khrushchev, who took a prominent part in the discussion, he said publicly at the Kremlin banquet: 'The gentleman to my right always speaks bluntly; such a person can be relied upon.'

A further reason for the settlement was that Adenauer too was affected by the Geneva spirit. While the whole world seemed to be swimming with the Geneva tide, he alone could not row against it. If Lisenhower could fraternize with the Russians as he did with gusto at Geneva, so could Adenauer. If the Atlantic powers could have diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, so could West Germany. Adenauer did not want to go down in history as Europe's Syngman Rhee.

There were of course more tangible reasons for Adenauer's decision. Among them the most prominent was the prospect

of the return of German prisoners. But an awful thought must have passed through the minds of Western statesmen: if Adenauer was prepared to pay so unexpected a price for the return of 9000 German prisoners, what would he, or his successor, not pay for the return of the 18 million Germans now in the Soviet orbit, to a united Fatherland?

7 THE TWENTIETH CONGRESS

MARXISM MODIFIED

FRESH from their triumphal visit to India. Burma and Afghanistan, the Soviet leaders plunged into the historic Twentieth Congress. The proceedings of the Congress opened with a mammoth speech by Khrushchev, lasting six and a half hours. He was acting as the spokesman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where there had been heated discussions on the issues placed before the Congress. In Stalin's time, the Central Committee was a nonentity; now it was beginning to become an effective organ.

At the Twentieth Congress the canons of Marxism were rubbed against the touchstone of life. One of the fundamental principles of Marxism had been that war was mevitable. Marx had said and Lenin had supported the theory that as long as capitalism existed wars would continue. This theory had been put forward at a one when in perialism was all-embracing and the forces opposed to it were weak and divided. But now the situation had changed. The Soviet Union was no longer a lonely communist island in a sea of capitalism. Moreover a new group of states, led by India, owing allegiance to neither system, had come into existence. The capitalist powers would think twice, therefore, before launching an attack on their enemies. These were the factors which prompted the Iwentieth Congress to come to the conclusion that "there is no tatal mentiability" bout war.

Just as war was not inevitable, neither was explicit war necessary for the establishment of socials m. This igain was a novel theory. Marx and Lenin had said that capitalists would not willingly part with power; v. lence all he would

compel them to do so. Now it was recognized that in certain conditions it might be possible to transform society without violence. Doubtless the revolutionary spirit had to be there; it was this which distinguished Marxists from reformists and opportunists. But a revolution was possible without force. Indeed the revolution in the Soviet Union itself was originally a peaceful affair. It was only when a counterrevolution, abetted and assisted by foreign powers, raised its head that a bloody civil war ensued. That might not be necessary everywhere. 'We do not recognize force and civil war', said the Soviet spokesman, 'as the only way of transforming society'.

It was admitted that it might be even possible to employ parliamentary forms for the transition to socialism. In the conditions prevailing in Russia in 1917 this was not possible, but this need not prevent working classes in other countries from trying to seize a stable parliamentary majority and thus converting parliament from an organ of bourgeois democracy into an instrument of the popular will. After all Marx himself had said that in certain circumstances universal suffrage could be turned 'from a means of deception into

an instrument of emancipation'.

The Twentieth Congress recognized not merely different modes of transition to socialism, but different types of socialism. 'All nations', Lenin had said, 'will come to socialism; this is inevitable; but not all will come in the same way'.

The pronouncement at the Twentieth Congress constituted an audacious departure from what had previously been regarded as the basic principles of Marxism. In Stalin's time, the views expressed at the Twentieth Congress would have been regarded as heresy. For a Communist to have advanced such propositions would have been as outrageous as for a Catholic to assert that the Virgin Mary's ascension to heaven was incorporeal.

STALIN REASSESSED

From the outset it was clear that the Twentieth Congress would carry out a reassessment of Stalin. The opening speech began thus: 'We have lost some prominent figures of the communist movement—J. V. Stalin, Klement Gottwald and Kyuichi Tokuda. Let us honour their memory by standing'. It was a strange way of referring to Stalin. At the Nineteenth Congress, delegate after delegate rose and saluted him as 'our great and glorious leader', 'the leader of the world communist movement', 'the leader of progressive mankind,' 'the leader of all those who are struggling for socialism, democracy and peace'; 'the greatest genius on earth', etc. And now the greatest genius on earth had become just a prominent member of the communist movement!

During the opening speech Stalin was hardly referred to though Lenin was constantly. It was left to Mikoyan to refer to Stalin by name and to criticize many aspects of his regime. For approximately twenty years, Mikovan said, there had been virtually no collective leadership in the Soviet Union; instead there flourished the cult of the individual, or 'the worship of miracle-working individuals', which vitiated the entire life of the Party. Now at last collective leadership had been reinstated. Mikovan said that Stalin's thesis, The Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR, was madequate and, in parts, incorrect. History had been falsified in Stalin's time. 'Facts were juggled, some people were arbitrarily glorified and others were entirely ignored . . . Secondary events were raised to undeserved heights and important events were played down.' Mikovan even went to the length of referring to Stalin's purges by saying that in his time some men had been unjustly declared 'enemies of the people'.

The Party decided to take the people into confidence by telling them the truth about Stalin Tens of thousands of educators were sent to the countryside to explain to the

people the truth about Stalin. His pictures were removed from museums; of the dozens in the Tretyakov art gallery only one was left. The presents given to him were dispersed hither and thither. When we arrived in the Soviet Union, there was a Stalin Museum, comparable to the Lenin Museum, containing presents which had been sent to him from all over the world on his seventieth birthday. Soon after his death the museum was closed and most of the presents went to the Museum of the Revolution where they were renamed as gifts given not to Joseph Stalin, but to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. His body, however, still lay in the mausoleum in the Red Square, side by side with Lenin's. It was not till 1962 that his body was removed from there and cremated, and the ashes boxed in the walls of the Kremlin, like those of other Soviet leaders.

GANDHIJI RECOGNIZED

There were many favourable references to India during the Congress. 'Peoples China', Khrushchev said, 'and independent India have advanced to the rank of great powers'; and 'the great Indian republic has made a great contribution to the strengthening of peace in Asia and throughout the world'. He spoke of his own visit to the East and his pleasure at having established a concordance of views with 'one of the world's great powers, India'. He added that the Five Principles enunciated in the joint statement by Nehru and Bulganin were capable of universal adoption and could well become the basis of relations even between the USA and the USSR.

It was pleasant to hear such sentiments but not surprising. What did surprise me was a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. This came from O V Kuusinen, a delegate of the Karelo-Innish SSR and a former member of the Comintern, who congratulated the Soviet leaders for 'justly acknowledging

the prominent role played by Mahatma Gandhi in the history of the Indian people'. It was one thing, he said, to criticize the philosophic conceptions of Mahatma Gandhi which were incompatible with Marxism; quite another to deny the positive historical role played by him. At the same time there appeared an article in the New Times, in which academician Zhukov criticized scholars for their deplorable mistakes in assessing the role played by 'so great a son of the Indian people as Mahatma Gandhi'.

A similar process of rehabilitation took place in the case of some of Russia's own great men. On 9 February, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the death of Dostoevsky was observed at a memorial meeting in the Hall of Columns. In Stalin's time, Dostoevsky, with his preoccupation with the soul, his interest in religion, his alleged 'preaching of fraternity between wolves and sheep' and his emphasis on the need for humility and submission, was regarded as a prophet of gloom who was apt to fill the minds of youth with defeatist thoughts. Now he was recognized as a great writer and a brilliant artist who, with his faults, had a deep sympathy with the sufferings of the humiliated and the injured He showed the earth as 'permeated from its crust to the centre with human tears': and in doing so he indicted the oppressors and exploiters of mankind with his powerful pen

THE SIXTH FIVE YEAR PLAN

The Congress approved the Sixth Live Year Plan. It was conceived on a scale which can truly be called heroic. Far from being littered with 'enigmatic percentages', it thro bled with living figures. It was proposed to increase the output of coal from 350 n. Wen metric tons to 593; of crude oil from 71 to 135; of crude steel, from 45 to 68; and of electricity, from 170 billion kilowatts to 320. Thus, the USSR's output of these commodities would exceed the combined

Heavy industry continued to have priority over light industry. There was to be an increase of 70 per cent in heavy industry; of 60 per cent in light industry. Heavy industry had to be pushed not merely for local, but for global, reasons. Abandoning Stalin's devious methods, the Soviet Government had now decided to compete with Western nations in winning the goodwill of the people of the Middle East and South-East Asia by taking a hand in their industrial development and supplying them with manufactured and capital goods.

Agriculture still lagged behind industry. The target for foodgrains fixed for 1960 was no more than that which should have been attained in 1955. Taking 100 as the base for 1950, the production of foodgrains in 1951 was only 97; in 1952, 113; in 1953, 101; and in 1954, 105. In 1955, however, mainly as a result of the drive for the cultivation of virgin lands, the level of grain production went up from 105 to 129. Seventy-five million acres of virgin lands were, for the first time,

brought under cultivation.

This was not done without considerable hardship to the settlers. Complaints appeared now and then in the newspapers, though the writers were trounced for their lack of public spirit. A worker on a collective farm wrote that he wanted to get back to his village. 'After all,' he said, 'I am a volunteer and not a conscript'. Another wrote from the virgin lands that he 'did not want to live like a savage among wolves'. A well-known writer, Nikolai Pogodin, wrote a play, We Three Went to the Virgin Lands. In this play three heroes set off for the virgin lands. One of them goes to escape punishment for hooliganism; another is a lonely girl who lives in a dormitory and has no friends or relations; and the third is deserted by his girl-friend and makes a splitsecond decision to volunteer for the virgin lands. Pravda took Pogodin to task for having failed to find anything heroic in the everyday life of his characters, and for depicting Soviet youth as shallow and feeble. Pogodin rewrote the play and expressed his regret for 'misplacing the accent in the play and showing the virgin lands as no man's land'.

A number of measures were taken at the Twentieth Congress to improve the amenities of workers. A seven-hour day for workers in factories and offices, and a six-hour day for workers in coal—and ore mining industries were to be introduced by 1960. Secondary education was made free and compulsory in rural, as well as urban, areas; and all tuition fees were abolished. A new criminal code was completed; and a new labour code was ordered to be prepared. And the more glaring disparities in salaries and pensions were removed.

There was no attempt to hide the fact that communism was still a long way off. Socialism had been completed but communism was not within sight. Khrushchev condemned those 'hot-heads' who wanted to lay down a time-table for the transition from one to the other. Hard and unremitting work, not 'pointless political phrase-mongering', would lead to the Promised Land. But complacency was the worst enemy of progress. There were some 'hide-bound seat-warmers' amongst officials who answered to Mayakovsky's description:

To important ranks he rose and in his office chair he stuck . . . sees no further than his nose.

Crammed his head with sundry 'isms', passed his Party school exam, but of Communism proper he's forgotten, sure I am.

Why

All he does is
sit and wait
for instructions
and directions,
leaving thinking to the great.

The Congress was reminded of the sacred provision in the Constitution: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat'.

THE CONGRESS AND COEXISTENCE

At the Twentieth Congress it was plainly declared that peaceful coexistence was the key-note of Soviet foreign policy. Lenin too had conceived of peaceful coexistence, but its advocacy at a time when the very existence of communism was precarious was a very different thing from what it is today. Stalin, too, occasionally referred to the need for coexistence. He did so mostly in order to cool the ardour of Trotskyites and others who visualized a world revolution in the not distant future. Realist that he was, Stalin saw that world revolution was a long way off. He saw that, despite the predictions of Marx, capitalism in Western Europewhere, Marx had thought, it was most ripe, most rotten and most ready to collapse - had still a certain vitality. He also knew that in the 'thirties the Soviet Union did not have sufficient strength to extend the frontiers of communism. Therefore, Stalin replaced the doctrine of world revolution with the motto: 'Socialism in one country', which implied the compulsory coexistence of the Soviet Union with the capitalist states. Thus Stalin's acquiescence in coexistence was basically the outcome of weakness, however much he tried to conceal it by his iron manner as well as by the Iron Curtain.

Now the position was different. The Soviet Union now advocated coexistence not from a position of weakness but from a position of strength. Industrially she had become the second strongest state in the world; she had even developed the hydrogen bomb. The First World War carried communism to Russia; the Second, to China and Eastern Europe. Historical experience had thus vindicated Marx's theory that wars were beneficial and, indeed, inevitable to

the progress of communism.

Yet the Twentieth Congress modified this theory. Marx, after all, did not foresee the hydrogen bomb. The next war will be, as the Congress recognized, 'the most destructive of all wars'. Hence the many steps which the Soviet Government took to ease tension and to avoid war. When the Soviet leaders now talked of the need for coexistence, they meant it; when they said peace, they meant peace. It was not a matter of tactics designed for a decade or two, but of policy fashioned for the foreseeable future. Now the hydrogen bomb was paramount. Coexistence, which in its simplest sense means a political stalemate, was necessitated by the military stalemate created by the hydrogen bomb It should, therefore, last as long as the hydrogen age does. Whether coexistence will contain a more positive ingredient than a mere political stalemate turns on the possibility of a change of heart not merely in the USSR, but in other countries, and particularly in China.

8 A DOUBLE CRISIS

THE SPREADING THAW

THE events in Hungary and Suez in the autumn of 1956 caused incalculable harm to international relations. How great was the harm can only be gauged when one remembers how high were the hopes of a detente in the middle of 1956.

The thaw which set in soon after Stalin's death had been steadily clearing the crust of suspicion and hatred which, in Stalin's time, frigidly bound Russia's attitude to world affairs. Asia was the first continent to be affected by this thaw: it helped to stop the war in Korea, despite Syngman Rhee, and the war in Indo-China, despite John Foster Dulles. India and Burma shed that fear and suspicion of Russia which they had inherited from Britain and established relations with her on a free, equal and mutually advantageous footing. So did Indonesia. Ceylon cast out Kotelawala, its blatantly anti-communist prime minister, and declared its intention to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. All the Arab states except Iraq drew closer to the communist world, though not to communism, and Egypt tesolved to exchange diplomatic missions with China.

In Europe, too, the thaw began to spread though at a slower pace than in Asia. Yugoslavia swung back into the Soviet orbit. Austria received independence on the basis of neutrality between 1 ast and West. Finland regained Porkkala; and the Linnish president and the prime ministers of Sweden, Norway and Denmark visited the Soviet Union. West Germany exchanged diplomatic missions with the Soviet Union. Great Britain received Bulganin and Khrush-chev and the Soviet Union received the French prime

minister and foreign minister: and the joint statement issued on each occasion revealed the existence of a great deal of

common ground between the two sides.

Bulganin and Khrushchev returned from their visit to England in a hopeful, though not buoyant, mood. They spoke appreciatively of the results of their visit, of the good personal relations established with the Prime Minister and his colleagues, of the desire of the British people for peace, friendship and co-operation, and of the eagerness of British business circles to develop trade with the Soviet Union. Even the frogman incident, regarding which a note was presented to the UK Government, was treated with restraint. Evidently Eden managed to handle the Soviet leaders with consummate savoir-faire.

Doubtless, Eden had to keep an eye on reactions in America. This aspect was shown in a cartoon by Shankar, the famous Indian cartoonist, in which Anthony Eden was depicted as a circus performer, thrusting the shaggy head of a well-tamed (British) lion into the jaws of Khrushchev and saying proudly to Dulles and Eisenhower: 'Look, he does not bite!'

One man reacted instinctively to the thaw the moment it set in: that was Churchill. Often blind, in his imperialist fervour, to the realities in Asia, he was always percipient of the trends in Europe. His recognition of the post-Stalin thaw in Russia received magnificent expression in his famous speech of 12 May 1953 in which he pleaded for a meeting of heads of states. Three years later, at Aachen, Churchill expressed the view that the thaw had elements of permanence in it. Indeed, he saw no reason why Russia should not join in the spirit of NATO and why she should not play her part in a true unity of Europe. 'The reunification of Germany', he said, 'could then be solved more easily than by means of rival blocs, confronting each other with suspicion and hostility.'

George Kennan, the well-known American expert on Soviet affairs, echoed this sentiment and expressed the view that Germany should be united as a neutral factor, so that she can blunt the edge of military bi-polarity in Europe and assuage the conflicts between the East and the West.

Thus even neutralism began to lose its odour in thinking circles in the USA. On the anniversary of D-Day in 1956, Eisenhower made a pronouncement regarding the role of neutral states. Recalling that the USA itself remained obstinately neutral in world conflicts for nearly one hundred and fifty years, he pleaded for a proper understanding of the thinking and motives of new states eager to be neutral. When these states spoke of being neutral, he said, they did not mean that they would be neutral between right and wrong, nor would this necessarily work to the disadvantage of the USA. 'The USA.' he said, 'should never make the mistake of considering them as if they were oblivious to the moral issues at stake in world affairs.' Hardly had these wise words ceased to reverberate through the world when Dulles, in his pontifical fashion, stigmatized neutralism as 'short sighted and immoral'.

In the middle of 1956, however, Dulles was in a minority, and a losing one at that. But with the events in Hungary and Suez, the hopes of the die-hards on both sides began

to rise.

SUEZ ECHOES

On my return to Moscow from a long trip to the Crimea in the last week of September, I found Moscow humming with echoes of the crisis in Suez. This crisis had been brewing ever since Egypt concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia. Until then, Egypt had been regarded by the Western powers, and specially by Great Britain, as falling within their own sphere of influence. To them the arms deal with a communist state seemed to be the thin end of the wedge. What actually led to the crisis, however, was the withdrawal of American aid for the construction of the Aswan Dam, accompanied by

certain churlish remarks made by Dulles regarding Egypt and its economy. This hurt the feelings of the Egyptians, and President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in a huff. Great Britain and France strongly objected to this measure. The sympathy of the Soviet Government was wholly with Egypt; and yet its first utterance on the subject was studiously moderate. It expressed the hope that: 'The good sense, experience and political sobriety of the statesmen of Great Britain and France will lead them to understand Egypt's historic action in the correct perspective and conduct themselves accordingly.' And as an instance of Britain's good sense, it referred to the fact that Britain had granted independence to India and Burma.

Britain and France, however, began to indulge in sabre-rattling on a big scale. The dispatch of British warships to the Mediterranean, the evacuation of British women and children from Egypt, and the presentation of 'the Dulles Plan' as a kind of ultimatum to Egypt all these indicated that war was imminent. Khrushchev thought that the time had come for a little plain speaking. At a party in the Rumanian Embassy on 23 August, in honour of their National Day, Khrushchev charged at Sir William Hayter, the British Ambassador, and M. Dejean, the French Ambassador, and warned them that if there were to be a war, Egypt would have the full sympathy of the Soviet Union. 'It will be a sacred war,' said Khrushchev, 'and if I had a son who would volunteer to fight for Egypt, I would say to him, go and fight.'

The echoes of the Suez crisis were also heard at the Syrian Embassy a few days later at a reception in honour of the President of Syria. By that time, England and France had invaded Egypt, and Syria had just broken off diplomatic relations with Great Britain and France. Unaware of this fact, Lady Hayter attended the party. 'Poor Lady Hayter!', said a Western diplomat's wife to Anujee, 'she did not know. If she had known, she would not have come. She is feeling so awkward. That is why her staff is not leaving her alone;

they are always around her. Poor Lady Hayter!' We, too. sympathized with her, but we felt more sorry for Mrs El Kony, the beautiful wife of the Egyptian Ambassador, and for the First Secretary's wife, Mrs Ghaleb, whom nothing had ever seemed to worry. Anujee went up to Mrs Ghaleb and inquired about the health of her mother in Cairo. 'Let my mother die,' she burst out. 'Let my brothers and sisters, all the eight of them. die. Only, my God, let my country be saved.'

In an unusual spurt of activity, the United Nations condemned the conduct of Britain and France. For once the USA and the USSR found themselves ranged on the same side in the Security Council. A resolution moved by the USA, calling for a cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israel's troops from Egypt, was vetoed by Britain and France. The Security Council having thus been paralysed, the matter was taken up in the General Assembly, and the Assembly recommended, by an overwhelming majority of sixty-four to five, a cease-fire and the withdrawal of all foreign troops. The only two states whom Britain, France and Israel could find in the whole world to support them were Australia and New Zealand.

The newspapers in Moscow condemned and ridiculed Antony Eden's prevarieations in Parliament over the Suez Canal. Eden began by asserting that the object of British intervention was to protect British lives and property in Egypt. Then he pleaded that his object was to safeguard the security of shipping in the Suez Canal. When it became all too clear that the Government's conduct had, instead of protecting British shipping, brought it to a standstill, the Government claimed that the expedition to Egypt was a 'police action' to keep the Egyptians and the Israelis apart. When the United Nations questioned the French and British right to appoint themselves as the world's policemen, the British Government said that its whole object was to goad the UN to action in the Middle East. Gaitskell retorted that every burglar could plead with equal justice that his object

in committing burglary was to keep the police in training! However, the British people, as a whole, condemned Eden's conduct in Suez and eventually compelled him to resign.

In the meantime the Soviet Government itself became the target of severe criticism on account of its conduct in Hungary. This, and the manner in which Hungary and Suez reacted on each other, will be described in the next section.

REVOLUTION IN HUNGARY

No event since the Second World War produced so much indignation in the West as Soviet conduct during the revolution in Hungary. India, too, came in for her share of criticism. India was accused by Western politicians of siding with the Soviet Union or at least conniving at her conduct in Hungary. India was charged with having double standards, one standard over the Suez incident and another over Hungary.

Ten years have passed since then, and one must make an

effort to view these events in the right perspective.

Basically, the Revolution denoted a revulsion against, to use a much abused word, Stalinism. It is significant that the first victim of the Revolution was the colossal statue of Stalin which used to stand in the heart of Budapest. The rule of Stalin was harsh enough for his own people; it was far harder to bear for the people of other countries. Soon after Stalin died, his successors in the USSR had the good sense to mitigate the rigours of Stalinism. They began the process of de-Stalinization which reached its climax in the historic Twentieth Congress at the beginning of 1956.

This had its effect in the neighbouring countries, particularly Poland and Hungary. Poland was the first and most vociferous country to take to de-Stalinization. In July 1956 there was a serious rising of workers in Poznan. The Prime Minister, Cyrankiewicz, admitted that the root cause of the trouble was 'soullessness towards workers'; and he handled

the crisis with sympathy and restraint. But there were political grievances too. The diehards in the Presidium of the Polish Communist Party were ousted, and Gomulka, who had been under detention as a Titoist, was brought back as Prime Minister. Thus the Poles began to walk proudly on what they called 'the Polish Road to Socialism'.

In Hungary the process of de-Stalinization was balked by that miniature Stalin, Rakosi, 'the Iron Man of Hungary'. Popular feeling against him had been rising. On 23 June 1956, at an all-night meeting of the Petofi Circle, a society of writers known after Hungary's most beloved poet, Rakosi's crimes were roundly denounced and the open demand was made that he should go. He went, but too late. A few years later. I visited Khrushchev in a lovely villa which had been placed at his disposal in the outskirts of Budapest. We talked reminiscently about events in Hungary in 1956. The great mistake, I said, was to have kept on Rakosi even after the Twentieth Congress, for he was the very antithesis of the spirit of that Congress. 'He should have been chucked out much earlier,' exclaimed Khrushchev.

After the fall of Rakosi in 1956, Hungary, too, decided to start on its own path to Socialism. I was in Hungary in the second week of October 1956, just a fortnight before the Revolution, with a cultural delegation from India. general atmosphere was one of delicious, and almost delirious excitement. With the fall of the Iron Man of Hungary, fell the Iron Curtain. The barbed wire fence, with its watchtowers, manned by frontier guards and floodlit at night, along the entire 125-mile frontier between Austria and Hungary, was dismantled. Artists and writers began to breathe a freer air. I was present at the premiere of a controversial ballet called The Marvellous Mandarm by a famous Hungarian composer, Bartok. Bartok was persona non grata in the time of Rakosi as well as Horthy and his music had not been allowed to be played for twenty years. Many communists, alive and dead, who had been the victims of Rakosi were rehabilitated. Among them was Rajk, who had been one of the principal architects of Communism in Hungary but was later denounced as a Titoist, charged with having organized a conspiracy to assassinate Rakosi and executed in 1949. On 6 October, I watched a macabre ceremony at which his remains were exhumed in the presence of his wife, together with those of his colleagues who had also been executed as Titoists, and buried with full military honours in the Central Cemetery, reserved for the illustrious builders of Communism.

There was one man, however, who still remained in the shadows. He was Imre Nagy who, like Gomulka in Poland, had a reputation of being at once nationalist and communist. There was an insistent popular demand for his return. If he had been brought back as Prime Minister after Rakosi's enforced retirement, it is just possible that Hungary would have escaped the horrors of a revolution. Eventually, he was brought back, but it was already too late. The Revolution was in full flood and no one could say where it would take Hungary.

I myself heard of the Revolution within a few hours of its outbreak. On 23 October 1956 at about 5 p.m. I was in my office in Moscow when I had a telephone call from Rahman, our newly appointed and very able Chargé d'Affaires in Budapest. He told me that a large crowd was marching towards Parliament House, that it consisted mostly of students, that the crowd was estimated at 30.000, that it was getting bigger and bigger and that it was making various demands, political and economic. Even when Rahman was in the middle of a sentence, the telephone was cut off—and remained so for weeks. And all communication with Budapest was cut off.

A fortnight after the Revolution I was permitted to visit Budapest. The railway and the air line to Budapest were still suspended. So I had to go via Prague and Vienna Khosla, our Ambassador to Czechosiovakia, accompanied the Wewere received at the Austro-Hungarian border by a very politic Russian Colonel, who accompanied us to Budapest

with two Russian cars, full of armed soldiers, one in front and the other behind.

I found Budapest terribly damaged, Pest more than Buda. Hundreds of buildings had been burnt out; many more had collapsed; and thousands had gaping holes caused by tank shells. Everywhere piles of debris were being cleared by men with set faces. The tram-lines, torn up during the revolt, were being repaired; and the buses and railway wagons which had served as barricades were being removed. Amidst all this destruction I saw an old woman in black placing flowers on one of the many fresh graves by the side of the road. She was mourning for one of the many thousand Hungarians who had laid down their lives. It must have been little consolation for her to know that several hundred Russians too had been killed.

I stayed in Budapest for a fortnight. There I made certain representations to the Government of Hungary—of which more later. I returned to Moscow and gave an account of my impressions and made certain representations to Bulganin, the Prime Minister, and Shepilov, the Foreign Minister.

Khosla and I, now accompanied by our wives, went back to Hungary again towards the middle of December and spent Christmas and New Year there. The Revolution had been quelled. The debris had been cleared from the streets, the tram-lines had been repaired and the hastily dug graves by the roadside had been moved to more decorous restingplaces. The offices had begun to function and the workers were beginning to work. Russian soldiers were no longer to be seen. Russian tanks had also disappeared, though a piercing eye might still glimpse some in the side-streets. The hotel in beautiful Margaret Island was again beginning to attract visitors. Music had returned to the island, though some of the best musicians had fled to Vienna and beyond. So had many ballermas, including Chinadidora, whom I had seen as Maria in The Fountain of Bakchisarai. On the whole, life was beginning to creep back into Budapest.

It was, however, clear that Hungary would not be allowed

to leave the Soviet orbit. But, within that orbit, Hungary and, indeed, all East European States, began to enjoy a freedom of action inconceivable in Stalin's days.

The Revolution had two phases, separated by the Soviet pronouncement of 30 October. During the earlier phase, the conduct of Soviet troops who had been called in by the new Prime Minister, Nagy, was marked with restraint. Indeed. to start with, they even fraternized with the 'rebels'.

On 30 October, the Soviet Government issued a statement, practically offering a new deal to 'the Commonwealth of Socialist States'. It declared that the Soviet Government had issued orders for withdrawal of its troops from Budapest and that the Government was prepared to open negotiations with the Hungarian Government for the withdrawal of troops from all Hungary. Mikoyan, the great trouble-shooter, was sent to Budapest to implement this declaration. Even when he was on his way by air came the news that Great Britain and France had landed their troops in Egypt. The situation suddenly became pregnant with the most dangerous possibilities. 'If there had been no Suez,' said Kadar, the Prime Minister of Hungary, to me in 1964, 'there would have been no Hungary."

Apart from the Suez crisis, there were certain internal factors which provoked the Soviet Government to go back on its declaration of 30 October and intervene in Hungary in full force. Nags, unlike Gomulka, was unable to regulate the revolutionary flood and was carried away by it. He unilaterally repudiated Hungary's membership of the Warsaw Pact, declared Hungary a neutral State, and appealed to the United Nations for a Lour Power Guarantee of its neutrality. The people avenged themselves on the hated wos (the Hungarian Secret Police), and vented their wrath on them in the most gruesome wass. A dozen Parties appeared on the scene on the Western Parliamentary pattern. Archbishop Mindzenty, who had been under detention, declared, as soon as he was released, that all that belonged to the Church

shall come back to the Church, and among the things that

belonged to the Church were millions of acres of land which had been distributed among the peasants. Above all, it looked as if the world was on the brink of the Third World War.

Well after midnight on 5 November, Gromyko summoned me to the Foreign Office and gave me a copy of a message which Prime Minister Bulganin had addressed to England, France and Israel, warning them that the USSR was ready to use force to curb aggression in Egypt. The Soviet Government also addressed a message to the US Government saying that the joint and immediate use of Soviet and American forces, naval and air, would be the most effective means of stopping aggression against Egypt and the Arab world.

On 7 November, at a banquet in the Kremlin on the anniversary of the Revolution, Khrushchev called me aside and told me that the Soviet Government's messages to England, France and Israel were not intended to extend the area of war, but to forestall war. A mere expression of resolve on the part of the USA and the USSR to resist aggression would be enough to stop war. In fact, Khrushchev went on, the Soviet Government could have sunk the whole British fleet in the Mediterranean in two hours; their technique was sufficiently advanced for it.

The Soviet Government gave me a message to be transmitted to Jawaharlal Nehru, acquainting him with the action proposed by the Soviet Government. In his reply, Nehru expressed at once his hatred of aggression and his horror of a world war. 'If countries which are militarily weak', said Nehru, 'are to be threatened by more powerful countries, then we revert to the rule of brutal might and the law of the jungle. All our declarations of peaceful coexistence and respect for the integrity and independence of nations have no meaning left; and the world reverts to international barbarism.' Nehru continued: 'War does not solve any problem, even if it may appear to do so for the moment. It creates far more difficult problems. War today is terrible to contemplate and humanity has rebelled against such a prospect.' He concluded by saving that 'any steps that

might lead to world war would be a crime against humanity and must be avoided '.

The possibility of a world war was what worried Jawaharlal Nehru most during the Hungarian cum Suez crisis. This does not mean that he ignored or connived at repression in Hungary. At a press conference on 25 October, two days after the Revolution. Nehru said that it seemed to be 'a national rising' and that he 'intensely disliked' the stationing of foreign troops, wherever it might be. 'The maintenance of forces on foreign soil anywhere in the world', said Jawaharlal Nehru in the General Assembly a couple of months later, 'is basically wrong, even though such maintenance is with the agreement of the country concerned.'

At Jawaharlal Nehru's instance, I called on the Soviet Foreign Office on the morning of 5 November, 1956, soon after the second phase of the Hungarian Revolution began. I told Zorin, the First Deputy Foreign Minister, that Jawaharlal Nehru was deeply worried and distressed over the developments in Hungary. I told him that we always sympathized with nations struggling for freedom, and that we were against the stationing or use of foreign troops in a country without its consent. Recent events in Hungary were, on the surface, a violation of the Five Principles to which the Soviet Union as well as India had subscribed. We did not want to be accused of using one yardstick in respect of the freedom of Asian countries and another when the freedom of European countries was at stake. It was particularly unfortunate that Hungary should be distracting attention from the crisis in Egypt. This was also the gist of the talks which I subsequently had with Shepilov, who was Foreign Minister then, and Prime Minister Bulganin.

In reply Zorin told me that he would transmit Jawaharlal Nehru's views to his Government immediately. It would doubtless take Nehru's views into account and send him a full explanation of its attitude. However, he felt it necessary to give at once a summary of the situation in Hungary. He explained how Hungarian emigres in the USA, West Ger

many and elsewhere had been trying, with American backing, to upset the foundations of the socialist state which had been set up after the war. He referred to the earmarking of 100 million dollars by the USA for subversive activities in Eastern Europe, and to the dispatch of air balloons, containing propaganda leaflets, and of groups of saboteurs into Hungary. Reactionaries, within and without, had taken full advantage of the serious mistakes committed by Rakosi's government in economic and administrative matters, and this had aroused the indignation of Hungarians. Nagy, said Zorin, had proved incapable of controlling the situation; a new government under Kadar had been formed, and as requested by that government the Soviet Union had sent its troops to restore order. Zorin assured me that the troops would be withdrawn as soon as they had fulfilled their mission. He also gave an assurance that the Soviet Government would adhere to its declaration of 30 October, which, he added, was fully in keeping with the Five Principles of peaceful coexistence.

As already mentioned, it was not till the middle of November that I was able to visit Budapest. There I met Prime Minister Kadar and tried hard to persuade him to let the Secretary-General of the UN visit Hungary in accordance with a resolution passed in the General Assembly. Mr Kadar was most courteous, but he thought that the situation in Hungary had been brought under control with great difficulty and that the visit of the Secretary-General just then would lead to a renewal of false hopes and violent agitation. The Government of India was deeply disappointed at the refusal of the Hungarian Government to admit the Secretary-General. In the General Assembly V. K. Krishna Menon criticized it as a 'lack of courtesy to the UN and a violation of the

spirit of the Charter'.

The US Government put forward a resolution condemning the use of Soviet forces in Hungary, demanding the immediate cessation of intervention and asserting the right of the Hungarian people to elect its own government. Almost all non-aligned States, fifteen in number, including India, abstained

on the American resolution. They did not want to condemn anyone for the sake of condemning, or treat Hungary primarily as an issue in the cold war. 'It was nauseating,' said the delegate of Lebanon in the UN,' to witness some delegations seize upon events in Hungary for political and propaganda purposes.' India knew that the Soviet Government would not remain a passive spectator to the crumbling of the Warsaw Pact or of its own position in Eastern Europe. The only hope lay in an appeal to the Soviet Union to withdraw its troops and to the Hungarian Government to permit the entry of the Secretary-General. In this we failed, but nothing else would have succeeded.

I visited Hungary many times before I left Moscow in 1961, I also visited it in 1964. Kadar, like Gomulka in Poland, has succeeded in steering Hungary to a place of honour and equality in the Communist world. Every time I noticed an appreciable improvement in the living standards of the people. Budapest itself has become a show-place; R. K. Nehru called it 'the Paris of Eastern Europe'. After my visit to Budapest a year after the Revolution, when the appearance of Budapest was already improving, I compared it to a woman who, having had a scuffle with her big neighbour, was trying to cover up the scars on her face by the use of cosmetics. But that remark was unfair both to Hungary and to the USSR. The Soviet Union had learned a lesson from the Revolution in Hungary and conceded far more freedom, especially in economic matters, to Hungary, Poland and other East European States than was conceivable a decade earlier.

9 THE DENOUEMENT

EDEN'S EXIT

In a classical drama the crisis is followed by the denouement. The crisis usually takes place in the third act; then comes the denouement, or the untying of knots, in the fourth act, which, again, is followed by a happy or tragic ending in the final act. As we have seen, there were serious crises in international relations in the autumn of 1956. The year 1957 saw the process of the untying of the knots produced by that crisis.

In England, it was easy enough to untie the Suez knot by discarding the man who was responsible for it. The British and the French realized the futility of embarking on an oldstyle imperialistic foray in the twentieth century. Not one of the objects with which they set out on their adventure was fulfilled. Eden's main purpose was to destroy Nasser. He had hoped that a show of military force would result in the formation of a government more amenable to British influence. In fact, the result of Britain's action was to strengthen Nasser's position in the Middle East. Materially, Britain and France inflicted as much suffering on themselves as on their enemy. The Iraq pipeline was cut; a number of refineries were damaged; petrol rationing was introduced; Saudi Arabia banned the export of oil to them; the British budget was affected; and there were even whispers that the pound sterling might have to be devalued. The British, therefore, heaved a sigh of relief when the man who was responsible for all these misfortunes left the stage.

I could not help feeling a certain sympathy for Anthony Eden. I had known him ever since we were undergraduates together at Christ Church. We both resided in Meadow Rnildings. He, like me, was a member of the Lotus Club, a society formed at Oxford soon after the First World War to promote friendship between Asia and Europe. I admired him when he resigned as Foreign Secretary in protest against the miserable policy of appeasement followed by his Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. He had distinguished himself by his championship of the League of Nations and was an architect of the United Nations; and I heard him in San Francisco declaiming that it was good to have a giant's strength but tyrannous to use it like a giant. And it was he who held Dulles back from the brink of war in Indo-China in 1954.

Thus Eden had a meritorious record as Foreign Secretary. Yet, as Prime Minister, he was a failure. His case was almost pathological. For almost two decades Churchill had groomed him as his successor, so much so that there was a music hall song in London: 'Always the bridesmaid, never the bride.' This long wait had bred some complexes in him, as in a spinster. In any case, to follow such a brilliant and exuberant Prime Minister as Churchill would have been difficult for any man. Perhaps Eden thought that by making a dramatic move in Egypt he too could carve a niche for himself in history. History, however, would not oblige him.

The Soviet Government refused to allow the Suez incident to be a permanent obstacle in the way of Anglo-Soviet friendship. 'Autumn' said Mikoyan in April 1957, 'was a time of bad weather, now we are in political spring.' In April, the Soviet Prime Minister sent a letter of eight thousand words to Maemilian, I den's successor, seeking the re-establishment of triendly relations between the USSR and Great Britain and the revival of cultural exchanges between the two countries. So friendly was this letter that the Vew Statesman captioned it 'From Bulgamin with love'

THE EISENHOWER DOCTRINE

THE US Government acquired great merit in Asian, and particularly Arab, eyes by President Eisenhower's resolute stand during the Anglo-French attack on Egypt. But it did not take Dulles long to dissipate it. He elaborated a 'doctrine', which he conveniently foisted on Eisenhower, which had as its object the filling of the Middle East 'vacuum' and casting the military and economic mantle of the USA over the whole area. Any state which refused to subscribe to the doctrine became the target of severe political and economic pressure. Behind the doctrine loomed the military might of the USA as demonstrated by the appearance of the 6th Fleet off Beirut in the spring of 1957.

In May, 1957, on my way back from India to Moscow, I spent a few days with my son in Damascus and saw the Eisenhower doctrine in operation. I saw the American 6th

Fleet lying off Beirut.

It was not a pleasant sight. To an Asian, it brought memories of three centuries of Western dominance in Asia. However, I tried not to allow my holiday in Damascus to be spoiled by such thoughts. I preferred to think of the beauty of Beirut and the antiquity of Damascus and the majesty of the Omayyed Mosque and the associations of the Street called Straight, where St Paul underwent his conversion, and the house of Ananias, and the wall from which St Paul escaped in a basket, and the villages of Bakha and Jubadan where people still speak the language of Christ.

Later in the year an attempt was made to persuade Syria to accept the Eisenhower doctrine. Syria refused to do so. Thereupon, every attempt was made to isolate Syria and compel her to fall in line with the majority of Arab states. Her normal trade with her neighbours, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan, was interrupted, and the USA began to undercut Syrian exports to Italy and to manipulate the Syrian pound in the market of Beirut. The result was that Syria found herself heading towards bankruptcy. This led to Khaled El-Azam's visit to Moscow in July, and to a most advantageous agreement under which Syria obtained Soviet aid to the extent of 300 million roubles in the form of goods, services and credit.

The moment the Soviet-Syrian agreement was signed, the Western powers relegated Syria to the category of a Soviet satellite. There followed the mission of Loy Henderson who visited Syria's neighbours but not Syria and returned with the remark that the situation there was 'serious, very serious'. Acting upon his advice, the US Government carried out a spectacular airlift of arms to Amman, ostensibly to enable Jordan to resist Syrian aggression. At the same time, Turkey started concentrating troops on her Syrian border.

In the meantime, the Soviet Government was not idle. The visit of the 6th Fleet to Beirut was countered by the visit of the Soviet Fleet to Latakia. Notes were addressed to the USA, Great Britain and France, accusing them of aggressive manoeuvres to bring about the overthrow of the Government of Syria. A note was also addressed to Turkey, asking her not to be a tool in the hands of Western powers and warning her that her conduct was fraught with dangerous consequences to herself.

For some time past the Soviet Government had been pressing for the adoption of its proposal that the four great powers should issue a joint declaration, renouncing the use of force in the Middle East, disavowing any intention to interfere in its internal affairs, and placing an embargo on the supply of arms. The fulfillment of these proposals would have created a suitable atmosphere for solving the problems of the Middle East. What stood in the way was the refusal of the Western powers to recognize the Soviet Union as a world power and to let her have a voice in the settlement of Middle Eastern problems. But the result of their manneuvres to keep the Soviet Union out was inevitably to bring her in

DOGMATISM AND REVISIONISM

One of the many knots which had to be untied after the revolt in Hungary was an ideological one. Ever since the Twentieth Congress, a struggle had been going on between what may broadly be called conservatism and liberalism, or, to use communist terms, dogmatism and revisionism. Molotov had come to be regarded as the great upholder of dogma, especially since the revolution in Hungary; to him revisionism was the cardinal sin. It was sheer impudence for a communist to try to revise, or even to question, the basic tenets of Marxism, as had been done at the Twentieth Congress. There it was declared that war is not inevitable, that violence is not essential for the transformation of society. and that there can be different roads to socialism. The immediate consequences were unexpected. The pent-up discontent against the regimentation on which Stalin had insisted threatened to explode. Poland set out on its own way to socialism, and Hungary almost strayed into the delectable backwoods of Western ideology. This gave those stalwart Stalinists, Molotov and Kaganovich, the opportunity of raising their heads, and their voices; and Khrushchev himself, confronted with 'the Fisenhower doctrine' and similar developments, declared that 'we are all Stalinists now'.

In the latter part of 1956 it was thought expedient to uphold Marxism in all its pristine purity. Indeed, even the term 'national socialism' was anothema, because the essence of Marxism was international proletarian solidarity. 'Divided, the workers are nothing,' said Lenin, 'united, they are everything.' National communism would divide the world's workers and thereby weaken them. Yugoslavia was not prepared to accept this position unreservedly. It had evolved its own form of socialism. Maria Vilian, wife of a former Yugoslav ambassador in India, wrote of the need for coexistence amongst communist states themselves. But to

certain theorists, co-existence in this context was a misnomer. There could be co-existence between nations which followed opposite social systems, such as capitalism and socialism. But how, they asked, could one speak of mere co-existence in the case of communist states, which are welded together by the philosophy of Marx? As well might one talk of the co-existence of the face, the hands and the legs!

Gomulka, too, was determined to lead Poland along its own road to socialism. At a meeting of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party he emphasized the need to develop socialism in accordance with the history and traditions of Poland. Poland, he said, had always been icalous of its national independence. The circumstances under which Poland was developing socialism were different from those which faced Russia when she set out on the socialist path. Russia was then a backward, isolated state, struggling against foreign intervention and reactionaries both at home and abroad. Moreover, the shadow of Hitler was beginning to loom larger and larger. Russia therefore had to embark on industrialization at breakneck speed. Therefore her rulers, said Gomulka, were compelled to mortgage the present for the future. 'Man's nature, however, is such that he does not worry much about future generations; and therefore Russia had to apply measures of coercion on a large scale and lofty socialist slogans could not find full expression in life.' Gomulka concluded that to follow blindly the Soviet example was neither necessary nor helpful.

This, to Molotov and men of his way of thinking, was a dangerous heresy. It would end in the disintegration of the communist monolith. The conduct of Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich was discussed at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in June 1957; and they were dismissed both from the Presidium and the Central Committee.

Molotov's dismissal had also an international aspect. It made it easier for the Soviet Government to follow a policy of peaceful co-existence. Molotov had never believed that Molotov's method was simply to put all the screws on. He was opposed to the goodwill missions which Bulganin and Khrushchev had undertaken to other countries and to the growth of personal contacts between the leaders of the Soviet Union and statesmen elsewhere. His dismissal was followed, a few months later, by the resignation of Bulganin and the assumption by Khrushchev of the office of Prime Minister. Thus the posts of Prime Minister and Party Secretary were once again combined as under Stalin. 'Power corrupts,' said Lord Acton, 'and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' But the days when a single person could exercise absolute power in the Soviet Union were gone; and the Central Committee of the Communist Party was now a far more effective organ than in Stalin's time.

In the early struggle between dogmatism and revisionism, dogmatism received a blow from an unexpected quarter. Mao Tse-tung condemned dogmatism in the most vigorous fashion. He said, 'Let a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools contend.' But it did not take long for the flowers to turn into, or be treated as, the most poisonous weeds, and Mao Tse-tung himself to turn into an unrepentant

dogmatist.

THE SPUTNIK

We were in a most remote corner of the earth, Urumchi, when we heard the announcement that the USSR had launched an earth satellite which was completing a global revolution every 95 minutes. All the Soviet publicity organs stressed the revolutionary significance of this event. Having conquered the earth, man was now embarking on a conquest of cosmos. He was no longer a prisoner of gravity; he had freed himself from the chains which had bound him to the ground. Soon Soviet scientists would reach the moon and

establish a physical station there, to be called Mirnaya (Of Peace). 'Humanity's most daring dreams', said Pravda, 'have come true.'

It was claimed that the Soviet achievement eclipsed what American scientists had tried, and failed, to accomplish. The diameter of the Soviet sputnik was 23 inches; of the abortive American Vanguard, 6 inches. The sputnik weighed 184.3 lb; the Vanguard, 21.5 lb. The sputnik was revolving 550 miles above the earth; the Vanguard was expected to revolve 300 miles up. And the speed of the sputnik was 18,000 miles per hour against the Vanguard's attempted 914. The successful launching denoted a mastery of the combined arts of rocket engineering and electronics which no other country in the world had yet attained. No wonder that in the USA there was not only admiration for the Soviet feat but consternation; and to judge by the glee with which Soviet newspapers reproduced the bewildered comments in the USA. one would think that American consternation was one of the by-products which the sputnik was intended to produce.

The main concern in the West was how far the Soviet lead would affect the grim duel between the USA and the USSR, between 'the free world' and communism. The launching of the satellite clearly confirmed that the USSR had outpaced the USA in the race towards' the ultimate weapon', for the satellite could not have been launched except by means of something like an intercontinental ballistic rocket. The USA was at last convinced that the Soviet Government did possess a ballistic missile capable of hitting any chosen target in any part of the world. The nuclear superiority on which the whole Western defence policy had been based was no longer a deterrent; neither was 'massive, mobile retaliation' any more a safe policy, as every launching site could now be reached and destroyed by Soviet missiles. 'You cannot send flesh and blood to fight things like that,' said Khrushchev.

The 40th Anniversary of the revolution was celebrated in a mood of high elation. It was announced that the Soviet Union had launched a second satellite weighing half a ton, that is, three times as much as the first sputnik and twentyfive times as much as the satellite projected by the USA and yet to be launched. The spectacle of this 'baby moon', containing various intricate instruments for measuring cosmic rays - and what has interested laymen even more, a dog in a hermetically sealed container revolving at a height of 1500 kilometres, was almost intoxicating to the sense of

Soviet pride.

The Soviet triumph in the field of science was celebrated at the great banquet given in the Kremlin on the eve of the New Year, 1958. At midnight the Kremlin bells rang out the old year and rang in the new; the lights were put out, the hall was in darkness; a large New Year tree began to revolve with multicoloured lights; a blue screen appeared, depicting the heavens; and one sputnik and then another and a third and bigger one swam into cosmic space and began to revolve with the stars. The sputniks were designated

'Stars of Peace'.

To the Americans, however, the 'Stars of Peace' seemed to be beacons of war. In politico-military circles the reaction was one of frustration and despair. This was reflected in the Gather Report, parts of which leaked out. The report said that the USSR had now gained an absolute military lead over the USA and, for some years, the USA would have to depend on 'Russian benevolence' for her national survival. The evidence produced before the Gaither Committee was so damning that two of the Committee's members were reported to have fainted during the hearings, one had a heart attack and another told a journalist that he felt as though he had been spending ten hours a day staring straight into hell However, the American people as a whole retained their saving sense of humour: they invented 'the sputnik cocktail', compounded of vodka, sour grapes and a dash of bitters!

10 STRAINS AND STRESSES

RELATIONS WITH YUGOSLAVIA

Despite the process of untying the knots of international tension, described in the last chapter, the strains and stresses in the international relations continued to persist. These were reflected in the relations of the Soviet Union both with fraternal states and states which were by no means fraternal. Among fraternal states, Yugoslavia moved in one direction and China in a diametrically opposite direction. For the time being, the difficulties with Yugoslavia were more apparent than those with China. The latter, however, eventually proved to be more formidable and, indeed, intractable, because the differences with China were not only ideological but issued from Chinese chauvinism.

The Soviet Union was anxious to preserve the unity of the communist camp and went out of its way to placate China. This was made clear during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Revolution. The atmosphere prevailing then was different from that at the Twentieth Congress. At the Twentieth Congress, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union made a bold, creative approach to Marxism. It did not hesitate to make, in the light of experience, certain modifications even in the fundamental tenets of Marxism. Now the central emphasis was on the need for absolute unity in the socialist camp. The Hungarian Revolution and the restiveness in Poland had underlined the dangers of letting each state follow its own path to communism regardless of the repercussions elsewhere. Since then, the main endeavour of the Soviet Government had been to repair the cracks in the communist fabric. If dogmatism was regarded as the principal danger at the Twentieth Congress, revisionism was now regarded as an even greater danger. President Tito, the first rebel against the monolithic unity of the communist camp, declined to attend the celebration of the 40th anniversary, and also refused to permit his representatives to

sign the joint declaration of communist parties.

The Soviet Union retaliated by refusing to send a delegation to the Yugoslav Party Congress, which was held a few weeks later. The example of the Soviet Union was followed by almost all other communist parties, including that of India. The reason was that the programme at the Yugoslav Congress contained a number of unorthodox propositions about Marxist ideology and a number of aspersions on Soviet policy. The entire proceedings were blacked out in the Soviet press, and a few days later Pravda referred to the shameless way in which Yugoslavia had been receiving assistance from the USA. For instance, Tito's speech at Pula, criticizing the Soviet Government for its intervention in Hungary, was rewarded by a US loan of 98 million dollars. Similarly, the Yugoslav refusal to subscribe to the joint declaration made by the communist parties present on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Revolution was followed by a US loan of nearly 63 million dollars.

The Soviet Government was hurt by certain remarks which Tito had made in his speech at the Party Congress. While he thanked the USA for its economic assistance, he merely said that relations between the Soviet and Yugoslav Governments had been developing on a mutually beneficial basis. Khrushchev, in particular, took exception to a Yugoslav remark that he was a 'practicist', ignorant of and indifferent to Marxist theory. In an interview which I had with Khrushchev in May 1958, he told me that he was proud of being a practicist. 'I do beheve', he told me, 'that what counts more than anything else is practice. Marxist theory helped us to win power and to consolidate it. Having done this we must help the people to eat well, dress well and live well. You cannot put theory into your soup or Marxism

into your clothes. If, after forty years of communism, a person cannot have a glass of milk or a pair of shoes, he will not believe that communism is a good thing, no matter what you tell him.'

CHINA AND THE COLD WAR

China took the lead in the campaign against Yugoslavia. Early in May, there appeared an editorial in a Chinese newspaper with the heading 'Modern Revisionism Must Be Condemned'. This paper condemned the Yugoslav Party programme as 'anti-Marxist, anti-Leninist and revisionist from head to foot'. The Red Banner said that the Yugoslav programme was but a re-edition of Djilas's The New Class; let Tito take Djilas as his mirror and see himself in it. Tito retorted that Marx, Engels and Lenin would turn in their graves if they knew how their thought was being treated in Peking.

From Stalin's death to the time of the Revolution in Hungary, the chief danger to communism, in Soviet eyes, was 'dogmatism' or a relapse to Stalinism. In Chinese eyes, however, the chief danger was 'revisionism'. The far-reaching decisions of the Twentieth Congress received little acclaim in China; indeed, Mao Tse-tung, who felt that he was wearing the mantle of Lenin and Stalin after Stalin's death, thought it an affront that decisions of such a far-reaching nature should have been taken without consulting him. He also tacitly disapproved of Khrushchev's sweeping condemnation of Stalin's methods. Indeed, when I went to Urumehi in October 1957, I found that everywhere Stalin's pictures were at least as prominent as Lenin's, if not more so. In front of our own hotel in Urumchi we saw, on the 8th anniversary of the Chinese Revolution, four huge pictures, those of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao Tse-tung.

It is true that during the Poznan riots and their aftermath

China supported the desire of Poland to follow its own road to socialism. But the Revolution in Hungary was taken to reveal the fearful dangers which confronted the entire

communist system if any relaxation was permitted.

Before long, China launched the 'great leap forward'. She embarked on the establishment of communes, though the Soviet Union had warned her that it was premature to do so. Under her latest economic plan she hoped to increase her industrial potential by 30 to 40 per cent every year and accomplish in one decade what even the Soviet Government had taken four decades to achieve. This meant the virtual sacrifice of the present generation to the next, the imposition of an unbearable strain on the people and the adoption of repressive methods if they showed the slightest discontent. A further reason why China preferred the continuation of the cold war was that it ensured that the Soviet Union would continue to support China's industrial reconstruction vigorously, without frittering away its resources elsewhere. In other words, to put it bluntly, the cold war was more profitable to China in her present stage of development than the kind of lukewarm peace which, she thought, was the mos that Soviet policy after Stalin's death was likely to achieve

CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In the second half of July, the world seemed to be on the brink of war.

A revolution had taken place in Iraq. The monarchy was overthrown. The young King, his wily uncle and Nuri al Said, the Prime Minister and staunchest of Britain's friends, were murdered. The British Embassy was set ablaze. Iraq was proclaimed a republic. All this made sensational news.

On 16 July, the Foreign Office handed me a copy of a grim statement on the Middle East situation. It refuted, point

by point, the reasons for which the US Government had claimed the right to send its armed forces to the Lebanon. 'The Soviet Government', the statement concluded, 'cannot remain indifferent to these events, which have created a grave threat in the area adjoining its frontier, and reserves the

right to take the necessary measures.'

The necessary measures followed one another in quick succession. The Republic of Iraq was recognized by the Soviet Union within a day or two of its emergence. The warning administered to the US Government was also administered to the British Government, which had landed troops in Jordan. Military manoeuvres by land, sea and air were ordered in the Trans-Caucasian and Turkistan military districts, adjoining Turkey and Iran; and, contrary to Soviet practice, this was announced in the newspapers clearly as a warning to Iran and Turkey to keep their hands off Iraq. Bulgaria, too, started military and naval manocuvres. Mammoth demonstrations, accompanied by stonethrowing and window-breaking, were staged in front of the British and American Embassies. Above all, Nasser paid a hurried visit to Moscow on the conclusion of his stay in Yugoslavia and it was announced that he and Khrushchev had discussed 'the means to preserve peace'.

The question now was whether the West would withdraw its forces gracefully from the Lebanon and Jordan or whether they would go forward and attack Iraq. Logic seemed to favour intervention in Iraq, for it was Iraq with its oil which mattered, and not Jordan or the Lebanon. As the Soviet Prime Minister put it, the British and the Americans had to feed Jordan and the Lebanon, but in Iraq they had been feeding on the people and waxing tat. Jawanarlal Nehru made urgent representations both to the UK and to the USA to arrest the drift to war. Macmillan assured Nehru that Britain would not attack Iraq. The American Ambassador in Delhi, too, gave much the same assurance, though less formally. And the Soviet Government called tor a conference of the heads of Governments of the USA, USSR,

UK, France and India with the participation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

CALM AFTER STORM

August, which saw the beginning of two world wars, spared us a third. Indeed, it may be said to have warded it off. The General Assembly met in special session in New York. There the Arab states performed a miracle: despite the persistent differences in their political outlook they formulated a joint resolution reminding themselves of the need for non-interference in one another's internal affairs and requesting the Secretary-General to concert measures to facilitate the withdrawal of British and American troops from Jordan and the Lebanon. The great powers had no alternative but to accept this resolution, and it was passed unanimously.

Each side acclaimed it as a victory for itself and a defeat for the other. The Western powers felt relieved that they had got off so lightly: the resolution was drafted with the utmost consideration for their susceptibilities; it contained no word of condemnation, or even criticism, of their conduct in landing troops in Jordan or the Lebanon. The Soviet Government, regardless, claimed that the resolution was a defeat for the West. *Pravda* observed that it denoted 'the utter bankruptcy of the adventurist policy of the Western powers in the Middle East'.

It must be said that even before the resolution had been introduced, the US Government was showing signs of revising its policy on the Middle East. The Republic of Iraq received its recognition. In recognizing the new government in Iraq the US Government showed that it at last realized how strong Arab nationalism is. With regard to the Far East, however, the USA remained unrepentant. The State Department reaffirmed its policy towards the People's Republic of China and its conviction that communism in China was but a passing phase. As if to remind the US Government

of the existence of the People's Republic, the Government of China started an intensive bombardment of the Quemoy and Matsu islands. And, like

The noble Duke of York
He had ten thousand men;
He marched them up to the top of the hill
And marched them down again.

Dulles started moving his marines from the Middle to the Far East.

CRISIS IN THE FAR EAST

In September, the Chinese Government established a blockade of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, so that no supplies could reach them and they would be forced to surrender. The USA, in consequence, decided that the 7th Fleet should convoy Chinese ships into these islands. To give in to the Chinese on the question of the off-shore islands would, Dulles said, be 'another Munich', and would 'strike a disastrous blow at the morale of Chiang's army'. This attitude caused more consternation among his own people and allies than in China or the USSR. 'Quemoy and Matsu,' said Senator Herbert H. Lehman, 'are not worth the life of one American boy.'

Towards the end of September Dulles had no alternative but to take note of the storm of criticism which his policy had roused within and outside the USA. He took advantage of a temporary cease-fire which China had proclaimed, and said that if this cease-fire was dependable it would be foolish to maintain large forces on Quemoy and Matsu. In fact, said Dulles, it was rather foolish of Chiang Kai-shek to have put them there. But when he went to Taiwan in order to persuade Chiang Kai-shek to withdraw the bulk of his forces Chaing was in no mood to be persuaded. A joint communique was issued, reiterating that Chiang Kai-shek was the authen-

tic spokesman of China, the centre of the hopes and aspirations of the Chinese people, and that it was his sacred mission to restore freedom to the people of China. And at a banquet in Taipeh, Dulles reaffirmed his conviction that communism in China was a passing phase and said that he would do everything in his power to hasten its passing.

On his way to Taiwan, in an interview with a British press correspondent, Dulles said that in his view the struggle against communism was primarily a moral rather than a political struggle. The communist challenge had to be met everywhere, because it involved 'a basic threat to the whole

moral values of our Judeo-Christian civilization'.

THE BERLIN CRISIS

For the first ten months of the year the German problem was quiescent. There was an occasional exchange of notes between the Western powers and the Soviet Union, but although these notes had much heat they contained little conviction. The strength of the language used about German unification only concealed the lack of purpose to promote it. But the Germans on both sides of the dividing line were less complacent. Larly in July the Bundestag passed a resolution calling for a four-power working group to prepare the basis for German reunification. Two months later, on 5 September, the East German Government proposed that two commissions be set up: one composed of the four powers to start consultations regarding a peace treaty; and the other composed of the two German states, to discuss and settle questions which were 'solely a matter for the two German states'. i.e. German reumfication. The Soviet Government accepted this proposal and forwarded it to the governments of the UK, USA and West Germany. The Western power, replied with an emphatic 'No', and reiterated that free elections were the essential prerequisite for reunification.

On 10 November Khrushchev said that the time had come for the occupying powers to give up their functions in Berlin to the German Democratic Republic. The Soviet Union. for its part, proposed to do this. 'Let the USA, France and Britain work out their own relations with the G. D. R. and come to an agreement with it if there are any questions relating to Berlin which interest them.' Subsequently, the Soviet Government proposed the conversion of West Berlin into a free city, with its own social and governmental system, independent of both German states and with a four-power guarantee on the Austrian model. Both German states would undertake to respect its status and the Soviet Government would have no objection to the participation of the UN in some form in order to ensure the observance of the arrangements. It proposed a time-limit of six months during which the existing arrangements in regard to the transportation of American, British and French military personnel and supplies to West Berlin would continue.

At a NATO meeting held a few days later the Western powers decided to reject the Soviet proposal. They realized, however, that it would not be possible for them to prevent the Soviet Union from handing over its functions in its own zone to East Germany. Nor, in that case, could they avoid having dealings with East German authorities with regard to transit, etc. Dulles dropped a hint that if the Soviet Government carried out its intention the US Government would regard East German functionaries as agents of the Soviet Government. The situation, however, was fraught with danger. Friction was bound to arise between the Western powers and the East German authorities. An even greater danger was that a revolt of the Hungarian type might occur in East Germany, into which West Germany would be drawn willy-nilly, and a world conflict might ensue. In order to avoid such a disaster, a solution of the German question was imperative; and the Soviet Government hoped that, in making their proposal, they would have at least prodded the Western powers to think about the German problem on fresh lines.

THE PASTERNAK INCIDENT

In October 1958, it was announced that Boris Pasternak had been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. This was generally acclaimed as a fitting tribute to a great author. In America, however, it was also welcomed as a slap in the face for communism, for Dr Zhivago, which was seen as a saga of the revolutionary period, was by no means a eulogy of the revolution. Some Western newspapers gloated over the fact that the award of the Nobel Prize would put the Soviet Government in a quandary; and the great question was, would it allow Pasternak to accept it?

For two or three days there was silence in the Soviet Union. Then the storm broke. Pasternak was fiercely criticized and his book was denounced as 'a counter-revolutionary piece of calumny', 'the gospel of a spiteful Babbitt and an enemy of the revolution', 'a clot of condensed slander on the USSR', and 'a gold mine for the reactionary press'. The Soviet Press said that the Nobel Committee's decision was 'a hostile act, directed against the Soviet State, with the aim of fanning the cold war and discrediting the idea of all-conquering socialism', an 'act of ideological sabotage'.

Pasternak was expelled from the Soviet Union of Writers; and he was obliged to decline the Nobel Prize 'because of the meaning attached to it in the community in which I live '. A number of eminent writers in Britain sent a telegram to Khrushchev expressing their concern for the fate of Pasternak and the hope that the Soviet Government would not

dishonour itself by victimizing him.

A copy of this telegram was sent to Jawaharlal Nehru, who forwarded it to me in his capacity of President of the Indian Academy of Literature. I conveyed his concern informally to the Soviet authorities, who told me that they had been aware for some time past that the book was drawing much attention in the West, but had taken no notice of it. Pasternak had been left alone in his comfortable dacha where he received foreign visitors, to whom he often made caustic comments about communism. For instance, he told a Swedish professor that 'the communists do not expect much from one. They only want a man to hate what he likes and like what he hates'. It was only when political capital was made of the Nobel award that the Soviet press reacted vigorously. There was, however, no reason to fear for Pasternak's fate; and I was referred to a statement which had just been put out by Tass. This said that no obstacles would be put in Pasternak's way if he wished to leave the Soviet Union to receive the Nobel Prize and 'to taste the delights of the capitalist paradise'.

The Tass statement was in reply to a letter which Pasternak had written to Khrushchev, a poignant document which it

is worth reproducing in full:

Respected Nikita Sergeyevich,

I am addressing myself to you personally, to the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. and to the Soviet Government.

From Comrade Semichastny's speech I came to know that the Government would not put any obstacles in the way of my leaving the USSR.

For me emigration is impossible. I am bound to Russia by my birth, life and work. I cannot think of existence separately and outside her. Whatever may be my mistakes and delusions, I condit as thate imagined that I would find myself in the centre of such a political compagn as is being carried on around my name in the West

Realizing this, I have informed the Swedish Acide widery coloritary renunciation of the Nobel Prize.

Leaving the frontiers of my country would be use I white me and I therefore request that this extreme measure should not be truen against me.

Placing my hand on my breast I can see that it is a second servifor Soviet literature and can see useful to it

31 October 1958.

B. Pasternak

Pasternak continued to serve S viet 122 and 213 in mis day ia on the outskirts of M x w. Hy day is the classification. No member of the Writers Providing to the tuneral. Yet a few adminers wept and the continue of the grant of

Among them were the novelists, Paustovsky and Kaverin, and the philosopher, Asmus, who praised him as a man of rare honesty and courage, whose writing would remain as long as the Russian language was alive. And a few hundred students recited his verses by his grave. Thus, to quote Voznesenski, a modern Russian poet,

They bore him to no entombment, They bore him to enthronement.

11 THE MARCH TO THE SUMMIT

THE TWENTY-FIRST CONGRESS

THE year 1959 opened with the Twenty-first Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was attended by 1269 delegates and 106 consultative delegates from all parts of the Soviet Union. Delegations from seventy communist parties in other countries were also in attendance. Notable among the distinguished delegates was Chou En-lai from China. This was the last Congress at which the USSR and China tried to present a united front to the world, though the world was beginning to suspect that there was something seriously amiss between them.

There was only one item on the agenda, the Seven Year No meeting of communists, however, can afford to ignore ideology. Chou En-lai's presence made it certain that ideological questions would be discussed, for China had been leading a veritable crusade against what she called revisionism. little realizing that in doing so she was lending herself to the charge of dogmatism. To the Soviet Union, both dogmatism and revisionism were reprehensible, but in an effort to conciliate China, the Soviet Union seemed to concede at the Twenty-first Congress that revisionism was now a more serious menace than dogmatism. Perhaps the fact that dogmatism in the Soviet Union had suffered a thorough defeat, specially with the eclipse of Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, also persuaded the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to pitch upon revisionism as the enemy of the hour.

On one point, however, the Soviet Union refused to compromise. That was on the question whether war is inevitable or not. At the Twentieth Congress it was proclaimed that there is no fatal inevitability about war, and this was reiterated at the Twenty-first. Chou En-lai, however, was not so optimistic. 'We must not overlook the fact,' he said, 'that imperialist war-maniacs may stake their hopes on war, just as a dog will leap over a wall in desperation, in order to save themselves from extinction.'

The Congress put forward a new proposition of considerable interest to the communist world. It was affirmed that the different communist states would pass more or less simultaneously to the higher phase of communist society by drawing upon one another's experience. This was intended at once to reassure more backward countries that they could always rely on the fraternal benevolence of the better developed ones, and to prevent any unseemly scramble among them to reach the communist goal. Perhaps the Soviet spokesman had China's 'great leap forward' movement in mind when he said that undue haste to reach the goal would do more harm than good.

THE SEVEN YEAR PLAN

The Seven Year Plan was the main subject of discussion at the Iwenty-first Congress. A few figures will give an idea of the magnitude of the Plan. Industrial output was to be raised by 80 per cent. Heavy industry would still have priority over light industry; the former would increase by 85-8 per cent and the latter by 62-5 per cent. The production of coal would be increased by 20 per cent to 600 million tons; pip iron, by 65-77 per cent to 65-70 million tons; and steel, by 86-65 per cent to 86-91 million tons. The output of oil would be doubled to 240 million tons as would electric power, to 500,000 million kilowatt hours. The production of aluminium would be increased nearly three times, gas, five times; plastic, seven times, synthetic tibres, twelve times; and diamonds, fourteen times. Gross agricultural output

would rise by 70 per cent. The target for grain in 1965 was 160-70 million tons. Meat would be doubled to 16 million

tons and milk quadrupled to 100 million tons.

Stalin's wages policy was frankly anti-egalitarian. It was now modified, and the disparity in incomes was reduced. During the period of the Seven Year Plan, minimum wages would increase from 270-350 roubles to 500-600 roubles, and pensions would also increase. The working week would be reduced to five days of seven hours each. Taxes, already negligible—they accounted for only 7 8 per cent of the revenue budget—would be done away with altogether. Above all, collective amenities in the form of social insurance, free education, sanatoria, crèches, kindergartens, homes for the aged, etc. would be greatly increased.

The Twenty-first Congress was called the 'Congress of the Builders of Communism'. The Soviet Union had attained socialism; and communism was within sight, but not within grasp. The principle on which society functioned would remain, for the time being, ' from each according to his ability. to each according to his work'. Incentives would still be offered to make men work, for it was only when there was an abundance of goods and an amplitude of leisure that the communist principle 'from each according to his ability; to each according to his need', could be introduced. Seven Year Plan was designed to lead to that goal. Even then communism will not have been attained; only the first stage of a communist construction of society will have been completed. Nor will the State have withered away, although some of the coercive functions now exercised by the State will have been transferred to public organizations.

The Twenty-first Congress proclaimed the Soviet Government's determination to overtake America. Khrushchev affirmed that by 1965 the agricultural output of the USSR, both total and per capita, would exceed the present level in the USA, and that in a further five years the USSR would catch up and pass the USA in the industrial field as well. Thus, by 1970, the USSR was expected to occupy the first

place both in per capita production and in the absolute volume of both agricultural and industrial production. This, said Khrushchev, will be 'the world historic victory of socialism'.

This optimistic prediction has not come true, but the Seven Year Plan was so stupendous as to cause Senator Hubert Humphrey to exclaim that, if successful, it would 'scare the pants off the West'.

THE EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

Ever since the thaw set in after Stalin's death, there was a steady procession of Heads of States and Governments from all parts of the world, and particularly from Asia and Africa, to Moscow

One of the most picturesque arrivals was the Emperor of Ethiopia in the middle of 1959. He spent about ten days touring the Soviet Union. Among the places he visited was Sverdlovsk. I wondered whether he realized that in that place an even more powerful emperor than himself, the Tsar of all the Russias, and his entire family met their fate.

The Emperor was accorded all the honours due to so ancient a potentate. The Order of Suvorov, 1st Class, was conferred on him; and he in turn conferred the Order of the Queen of Sheba on President Voroshilov. An Ilyushin XIV aircraft was presented to him by the Soviet Government. A trade pact was signed, and the two countries agreed to give most favoured nation treatment to each other. A Soviet hospital was offered to be built and equipped, free of charge, in Addis Ababa. Above all, the Soviet Government offered a credit of 400 million roubles to Ethiopia. In view of the population and resources of Ethiopia, this was a very tidy sum indeed

Haile Selassie's visit must have greatly enhanced his prestige in Africa. Llewellyn Thompson, the American

Ambassador, suggested to me that the Emperor probably felt that he would have no great influence in Africa so long

as his only foreign ties were with the West.

In those days the Bandung spirit was very much alive. Whenever the Head of an Asian or African State or Government came to the Soviet Union, this spirit found expression in a banquet given by the Heads of all Asian and African missions in Moscow to the visiting dignitary, to which all the members of the Soviet Presidium were also invited. This practice was started during the visit of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955. Among the distinguished statesmen thus entertained were U Nu of Burma, Nasser of Egypt, Sihanouk of Cambodia, Sékou Touré of Guinea, Soekarno of Indonesia, the Kings of Afghanistan and Nepal and the President of Syria. At most of these banquets I, as the doyen among the Asian and African ambassadors, had the honour to preside.

Sitting next to the Emperor of Ethiopia, I had a strange sensation. Two years previously when I walked on the street called Straight in Damascus, where St Paul underwent his conversion, I felt two thousand years slipping by. I felt now a similar sensation. In fact the passage of time was even greater, because while the street called Straight goes back to the New Testament, the history of Ethiopia goes back to the Old. It was out of the union of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba nearly three thousand years ago that the dynasty of Ethiopia was born.

At the banquet I recalled how, in our own time, a brutal attempt was made to destroy the independence of this ancient kingdom and how the League of Nations looked on. I said that it was not pleasant to recall those incidents, and yet it was necessary to remember them lest Fascism or Nazism should raise its head again.

In the course of my toast to the Emperor at the Bandang banquet, I referred to his deep concern for the walture of his people. In this respect, I said, he was different from that other king who once lived next door and is now gone for ever, Farouk. Farouk once said that in twenty years there

would be only five kings left, the Kings of Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts and Spades, and the King of England. But, I went on, he had forgotten his neighbour. The King of Ethiopia remained, and would continue to remain, because he had

identified himself with his people.

Masood Ansari, the Ambassador of Iran, took exception to the story of the five kings. He said that if this portion of my speech was published it would land him in trouble with the Shah-in-Shah. I therefore saw to it that the passage was omitted in the newspapers. At the same time, I thought of Raymond Asquith who once put a conundrum to his fellow undergraduates at Oxford. 'What,' he asked, 'is that which God never sees, kings seldom see and the common man sees every day?' The answer: 'A joke.'

THE GERMAN PROBLEM

As soon as the dust raised by the events in Hungary and Suez in 1956 began to settle, the Soviet Government started throwing out feelers for a summit conference of the heads of the great powers at which major international problems could be discussed. No problem was graver than that of Germany. There was general agreement that for the conference to yield results the ground must be carefully prepared and that the summit conference should be preceded by a Foreign Ministers' conference. Accordingly, a conference of Foreign Ministers was held in Geneva in July 1959, at which the principal item was the German problem.

'We are in complete confusion,' said Couve de Murville, the French Foreign Minister. 'We have reached a point at which neither side knows what the other is talking about.' This was a true enough description, but it would have been even truer if he had said that among the Western powers themselves no one knew what the other was talking about. This was natural because the different protagonists entered

the lists at Geneva with different objectives. To the Soviet Union Geneva was but an inconvenient inn on the way to the shining summit, where, as Khrushchev once said, the heavyweights would face one another. Great Britain regarded the foreign ministers' conference as a necessary preparation for a necessary conference at the highest level. France had her eyes less on the summit conference than on that summit of greatness achieved by the possession of the nuclear bomb. As for West Germany, any hope that she would adopt a more flexible policy was set at rest by what Badruddin Tyabji, our Ambassador in Bonn, called 'the political self-resurrection' of Dr Adenauer. Between these contrary currents, the US delegation sailed a little uncertainly, less rigidly opposed to the summit than in Dulles's lifetime, and vet genuinely suspicious of its usefulness and fearful of an unequal encounter between its own ailing President and the robust prime minister of the USSR.

Some progress, however, was made during the first phase of the conference. The mere fact that East German representatives now sat on a footing of equality with West German was a gain for the Soviet point of view. The Western powers made a further concession when they took Berlin out of their 'package' which they had formerly proclaimed as integral and indivisible. They were prepared to agree not to make any addition to their garrison of 11,000 men in West Berlin and to refrain, on a reciprocal basis, from subversive propaganda and espionage. They were even prepared to treat East Germans as agents of the Soviet Government in regulating access to Berlin. In return, they demanded from the Soviet Government a clear recognition of their right to maintain occupation forces in Berlin and an assurance that the Soviet Government would make no unilateral moves pending a summit conference. But the Soviet Government was not prepared to sign an agreement perpetuating the occupation regime in West Berlin. It proposed that a commission consisting of West and East German representatives be appointed on a basis of parity, in order to promote contacts between the two states and to prepare for a peace treaty. Provided this was done, it agreed not to make any unilateral moves as long as an interim settlement was in force. This seemed to satisfy Great Britain, but the other Western powers still remained unappeased. They now rejected the Soviet proposal for an all-German commission and supported Adenauer's proposal for a Big Four commission, with West and East Germans as advisers. Pravda described this as 'a piece of political sabotage'. 'How long', asked Pravda, 'would the West continue to play the unenviable role of a cat's-paw for Bonn?'

THE ICE-BREAKER

It was announced that in the winter of 1959 the new Soviet ice-breaker, the first in the world to be run with atomic power, would come into operation. The Soviet Government also made a great effort to break the ice of the cold war, through a meeting of the heads of Governments in the USA and the USSR. Accordingly it was decided that Khrushchev and Eisenhower would meet first in Washington and then in Moscow, in Washington in the autumn of 1959 and in Moscow in the spring of 1960. The Soviet newspapers published editorials with such headings as 'a turning-point in international relations', 'the end of an evil era', 'the beginning of a new era '. A commentator even invoked the Bible: the day was coming when the Biblical forecast of turning swords into ploughshares would be fulfilled. Ilya Ehrenburg attributed the coming meeting to a change in the temper of America. Clearly, not only was McCarthy dead, but McCarthyism too. Ehrenburg was too polite to refer to the recent passing of a more distinguished and formidable figure. The New Statesman had no such inhibition; it said that the proposed meeting between Lisenhower and Khrushchev showed that Dulles was truly in his grave.

Soviet jubilation over the proposed meeting was compounded of two elements, pride and relief. Pride at the fact that the USA, the mightiest power on earth, was at last compelled to recognize the Soviet Union as an equal. Relief at the thought that the dreadful prospect of nuclear war might recede and even disappear. No nation has a greater fear of, or a greater right to fear, war. A recent census of the USSR showed how frightful were the consequences of the last war. There were twenty million more women than men in the Soviet Union. Among people over thirty, there were five women for every three men. And the casualties in the war, including the children who should have been born but were not, came to more than forty million.

Western reactions to the meeting of the American President and the Soviet Prime Minister varied from capital to capital. Great Britain welcomed the proposed meeting with a certain parental pride, for it was after Macmillan's visit to Moscow in the early part of the year that the proposed meeting assumed shape. Adenauer felt that for Eisenhower to negotiate alone with so resourceful an adversary as Khrushchev was to take a needless hazard. De Gaulle compared Eisenhower with a lone horseman riding out to the enemy's camp to talk with him; and Debré described Americans as 'the masters or would-be masters of France', who, to use the words of another Frenchman, Raymond Aron, were out to establish 'an American or Anglo-American protectorate over Western Europe'. When Khrushchev was asked by a Western correspondent if an agreement between the two super powers would not harm the lesser ones, he replied no. After all, if the great powers fell out among themselves, the smaller powers would be the first to suffer. As a Russian proverb had it, 'Landlords fight and the heads of the peasants crack.'

There is an equally good Burmese proverb: 'Buffaloes fight and the grass is destroyed.'

THE LUNIK HITS THE MOON

Khrushchev's arrival in the USA was preceded by an event of not only earthly, but heavenly, significance. Man hit the moon. On 12 September it was announced that a multistage cosmic rocket, weighing 1511 kilograms (without fuel) and carrying various scientific instruments weighing 390 kilograms, including a radio transmitter, had been launched and was proceeding at a speed exceeding 11.2 kilometres per second. The rocket was expected to reach the surface of the moon at 5 minutes past midnight on the 14th; actually, it reached its destination at 2 minutes 24 seconds past midnight. To have launched so heavy an object with such accuracy towards an object a quarter of a million miles away and to have hit the mark was a brilliant demonstration of the advance which Soviet science and technology had made.

The Soviet press commented on the epochal significance of this flight to a heavenly body. The problem of reaching other planets was now solved in principle, although the problem of making a safe return to earth had yet to be solved. A great step, said *Pravda*, has been taken in probing the mysteries of the universe; and a new era has dawned in the annals of mankind.

The launching of the lunik caused less consternation in the USA than did the launching of the first sputnik in October 1957. The Russian lead in space was now acknowledged, even in the USA. Werner von Braun, the director of the US Army rocket programme, said that as things stood he doubted whether the USA could overtake the USSR in space. Although the USA also had rockets which could reach the moon, she could not match the power and size of Soviet rockets. One of von Braun's colleagues, the Director of Defence Engineering, admitted that the USSR had means to guide missiles with pinpoint accuracy and said that there

was no doubt that she could now hit New York City from Moscow.

On his arrival in the USA Khrushchev presented Eisenhower with a duplicate of the Soviet pennant which had been landed on the moon. The pennant bore the inscription, 'The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, September 1959'. When a press correspondent asked him whether this denoted Russian desire to claim ownership of the moon, Khrushchev replied that the question betrayed a capitalist mentality. In the Soviet Union the word 'mine' was fast giving way to 'ours'; and the moon would be 'ours' in the sense that it belonged to the whole world. When the Americans landed on the moon, as Khrushchev had no doubt they soon would, the USSR would, as an old tenant of the moon, welcome them.

THE SPIRIT OF CAMP DAVID

Khrushchev's visit to the USA lasted from the 15th to the 27th of September. Nothing was allowed to spoil the atmosphere. The usual diatribes in the press against America were toned down almost to nothing, except in respect of Laos, where persistent American violation of the decisions of the Geneva conference had precipitated a crisis. Eisenhower was treated with particular respect in the press.

Khrushchev's most impressive speech in the UAS was the one he made at the United Nations on disarmament. The arms race, he said, had not helped to solve a single international problem. Modern war was horrible beyond words; as an American physicist had said, a single hydrogen bomb would release more energy than all the explosions set off in all the wars in history. In any coming war there would be no difference between the front and the rear, between soldiers and children, and even future generations would be affected. Such a war might be set off by an accident or a single individual's aberration. He urged that

the only salvation for humanity lay in complete disarmament; and he asked that within four years all nations should be deprived of the means for waging war. Armies, navies and air forces would cease to exist and all war ministries, general staffs and military academies would be abolished. All atomic and hydrogen weapons would be destroyed and all military bases in foreign countries withdrawn. The only puntive instruments which would remain at the disposal of governments would be small contingents of police or militia for preserving internal order.

At tirst the West was disposed to dismiss this proposal simply as another propaganda stunt, but some felt that Khrushchev was sincere. Nehru described his proposals as brave and far-reaching. Elsewhere many regarded them as idealistic but a few realized that the world had come to such a pass that today idealism might be the best form of

realism.

On returning to Moscow, Khrushchev gave his impression of his visit at a mammoth gathering in the Lenin stadium, the like of which I had not seen in Moscow. He paid a fervent tribute to Eisenhower and his sincere desire to end the cold war and to develop friendly relations with the USSR and, indeed, with all countries in the world. He said that the welcome he had received in Washington was one 'worthy of our great country and our great people'. Not that it was roses, roses all the way: there were some evil forces, some 'children of Satan', like the Mayor of Los Angeles, who were bent on the continuation of the cold war. 'Such evil spirits,' said Khrushchev, 'should be exposed, shown up to the whole world, publicly whipped and put in the frying pan.'

The exchange of views between the two statesmen appeared to have been useful. The US Government agreed to consider the Soviet Government's disarmament proposals; and the Soviet Government agreed to consider any alternative proposals which the Americans might make. As for Germany, both statesmen agreed that a summit meeting would be

necessary and useful. And it was announced that President Eisenhower and family would visit the USSR in the spring.

THE SUMMIT IN SIGHT

The joint communiqué issued by Eisenhower and Khrushchev as a result of their talks at Camp David seemed cold and colourless when compared with communiqués issued on equally historic occasions. It was clear, however, that there was more in it than met the eye. The most important statement was that relating to Germany which said that, subject to the approval of the other interested parties, negotiations would be reopened. Eisenhower sought the approval of his allies for a summit meeting to be held before the end of the year; and Macmillan said on 30 September that the date of the summit meeting would be announced 'in the next few days'.

But the climbers to the summit had hardly reached the foothills when they came across a determined road-block in the form of de Gaulle. Their attempt to remove it failed: the French Government announced its intention not to budge, at any rate till the spring. De Gaulle insisted that the Western powers should meet and co-ordinate their course of action before meeting Khrushchev. He also insisted that before a summit meeting could be held there should be evidence of 'a change in world atmosphere'.

Adenauer, apprehensive that any summit discussions on Berlin might involve at least an indirect recognition of East Germany, heaved a sigh of relief at De Gaulle's insistence on the postponement of the summit conference. Such a postponement, he said, would not give him any grey hairs. However, since the two super powers were bent on a meeting at the summit, it was felt that no other power, great or small, could block their progress towards it.

Nor, it seemed, could anything block the Soviet Union's

progress in the celestial sphere. On 4 October, that is, on the second anniversary of the launching of the first sputnik, the USSR fired into space the third lunik, comprising an automatic inter-planetary station, weighing 613 lb. Its object was to investigate whether there was life on Mars and a prospect of life on the moon and to photograph the far side of the moon. The photographs and the scientific data obtained were published. A large lake on the far side of the moon was called the Sea of Moscow; and a mountain range was called the Sovetsky Mountains. Three craters were named after scientists: Tsiolkovsky, the Russian rocket pioneer; Lomonossov, the eighteenth-century founder of the Russian Academy of Sciences; and Joliot Curie, the French scientist who had recently died. Imagination baulks at the thought of the third lunik tracing a fantastic figure, like a gigantic S, in space: flying between the gravitational fields of three heavenly bodies, the earth, the moon and the sun; carrying a veritable flying laboratory consisting of the most intricate scientific equipment; responding unerringly to the devices installed on board and to orders transmitted from the earth; taking photographs of that side of the moon which had hitherto been hidden from the eye of man; developing them in its own laboratory and transmitting them over a distance of 300,000 miles to the earth. No wonder that one of the lunar lakes has been named the 'Sea of Dreams'. 'The Soviet people,' said Pravda, ' are turning age-old dreams into reality and have ushered in an era in which fairy tales are coming true.'

12 RETREAT FROM THE SUMMIT

THE U-2 INCIDENT

During the first quarter of the year 1960, the great ones of the earth indulged in an orgy of travel. Khrushchev's visit to the USA seemed to have set off a spirit of wanderlust and sent them flying in all directions. Eisenhower made a lightning trip to India and a number of other Asian countries and Khrushchev followed him to India and went on to Indonesia. Adenauer went to Washington. Macmillan went to France and de Gaulle returned his visit. Eisenhower went to South America and Voroshilov came to India. Gronchi went to Moscow and Khrushchev went to France. They reminded me of trapeze artistes who pass exhilaratingly close to one another, yet with no contact or, thank God, collision.

With the summit in the offing and spring in the air, April was an unusually placid month. May, too, opened quietly and graciously. A benign sun shone on the May Day parade, said to have been the shortest on record; and Marshal Malinovsky cooed peace and coexistence. But at that very moment a deed of dreadful note was being done; an American spy plane had penetrated deep into the Soviet Union and been shot down at Sverdlovsk in the Urals. This was announced

at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet on 5 May.

The Soviet Prime Minister began his speech with a two-hour review of the internal situation. Then there was an interval of twenty minutes, when many Heads of Missions went home for lunch. They regretted it later, for the afternoon session was pregnant with drama. Then Khrushchev turned his attent on to international affairs. He dwelt on certain factors which he said roused hope and on others.

which caused despair such as certain utterances made by Dillon and Herter. He criticized Eisenhower's decision to spend only ten days in Paris and then to leave the conference in Nixon's charge. To do so, said Khrushchev, quoting an old Russian proverb, would be like leaving the cabbage to the care of the goat! There were still many persons who wanted to maintain tension and even to exacerbate it. For example, an American plane had violated Soviet air space on 9 April. A more flagrant violation took place on 1 May, and the plane was shot down. The plane must have come, said Khrushchev, from Turkey, Iran or Pakistan. These countries as well as the USA were reminded of the mighty

retaliatory capacity of the Soviet Union.

Khrushehev spoke at another session of the Supreme Soviet two days later. Referring to the spy plane incident, he apologized to the members of the Supreme Soviet for not having taken them fully into confidence on the previous occasion. The pilot of the plane, he said amidst cheers, had been caught alive and was talking. He did not disclose this fact at the last meeting because he wanted to know what story the Americans would invent in explanation of their conduct. He then proceeded to tear to shreds the American concoction that the plane in question was a meteorological plane which had been sent out from Turkey with the object of observing conditions at high altitudes, that the last message from the plane was that the oxygen supply was failing. that the pilot might have become dizzy for want of oxygen and the plane might have strayed across the Turkish border into Soviet territory. Khrushchev then related the real story, as told by the pilot, Francis Powers. He had, he admitted, been serving in Turkey in the American Central Intelligence Service and set out on this mission on 27 April. He flew to Peshawar and spent four days there. At dawn on 1 May he took off from Peshawar and flew over the Pamir Mountains and the Aral Sea to the Ural region in the heart of the Soviet Union. His intention was to fly right across Russia to Arkhangelsk and Murmansk and then to land at a base in Norway. A watch was kept on him throughout his flight above Soviet territory. After he had proceeded for a distance of 2000 kilometres in about four hours, his plane was shot down by a rocket at a height of 60,000 feet. As soon as it was hit, Powers parachuted to the ground. Powers had been provided with a syringe containing deadly poison to kill himself if necessary; but, 'every living thing wants to live' and Powers did not use the poison needle. Khrushchev exhibited with gusto the photographs which Powers had taken of Soviet military airfields and petrol dumps, and the magnetic tape with which he had recorded Soviet military signals. He also displayed bundles of notes which Powers had carried in various currencies, including 75,000 roubles and some French gold francs. Powers also had with him two ladies' gold watches and seven gold rings. Was Powers going to fly still higher, said Khrushchev, and seduce the girls on Mars?

The Deputies of the Supreme Soviet reacted to these revelations with indignation tempered with amusement at Khrushchev's ironical sallies. He repeated his warning to 'the aggressors' and their satellites, Turkey and Pakistan, which had permitted their airfields to be used for a nefarious purpose, and warned them to desist from playing with fire. He hinted that Powers might have to stand trial. He announced the formation of a new command of Soviet rocketry under Marshal Nedelin, a hero of the last war.

At the end of Khrushchev's philippic, one's only comfort lay in the fact that he had said nothing calculated to spoil the chances of the summit conference, due to begin in Paris on 16 May, or the visit of Eisenhower, to take place on 10 June.

THE BREAK-UP OF THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE

On 16 May the heads of the governments of Great Britain,

France, the USA and the USSR met in Paris for the long-looked-for summit conference. Hardly had the conference begun when it ended in anger and mutual recrimination.

In order to assess the responsibility for this debacle, one has to recall the sequence of events during the previous fortnight. On the 5th of May the Supreme Soviet was informed of the incursion of the U-2. On the 6th, the Americans put out the story that it was a meteorological plane which had involuntarily strayed into Soviet territory. On the 7th, Khrushchev nailed this lie on the head, disclosed that the pilot was alive and gave graphic details of what had happened. Nevertheless he went out of his way to absolve Eisenhower of all responsibility. The US Government now admitted that it was an American plane but said that the flight had been undertaken without authority. On the 9th, Herter stated that it was the practice to undertake such flights under general instructions issued by the President. On the 11th, the wrecked plane was exhibited in Gorki Park, where Khrushchev arrived unexpectedly, held an impromptu press conference, and severely condemned the American attitude. Of Eisenhower personally, he spoke more in sorrow than in anger; and he affirmed his determination to go to the summit conference. But within a few hours there came Eisenhower's own statement, claborately justifying such flights and implying that they would continue. This was a challenge to Soviet sovereignty which could not but be taken up. As if to leave no other course open a report that such flights had been suspended was officially contradicted on the 12th. The Presidium met on the 13th and decided that Khrushchev should demand a full apology from the US government together with an assurance against the recurrence of such flights and the punishment of the officials concerned. On the 14th. Khrushchev left for Paris. On the 15th he warned Macmillan and de Gaulle of the action which he proposed to take. On the 16th, the four heads of governments met. Khrushchev refused to shake hands with I isenhower and read out his statement, demanding an apology.

Khrushchev's statement was couched in angry terms, reflecting his choleric temperament, his pent-up frustration and his total disillusionment with Eisenhower. It was evident that he felt that the least reparation which the USA could make in the circumstances was an apology. He could not have regarded his demand as in any way extraordinary. He himself went to Belgrade five years ago and handsomely apologized to President Tito, once satisfied that his government had wronged Yugoslavia. Only a few days earlier the US Government had itself apologized to Cuba for an unauthorized flight. Khrushchev hoped that at least Macmillan and de Gaulle would understand his position, which is why he went to Paris two days before the conference was due to begin and apprised them of his attitude. If, even at that stage, Eisenhower had disclosed that the flights were suspended and would not be resumed, some formula might have been devised to save the conference. But the President reserved this announcement for the summit meeting, by which time it was too late; and the situation was worsened by the worldwide alert of American combat forces ordered by the US Secretary of Defence.

Eisenhower's statement in Paris contained no word of regret—on the contrary, he maintained that clandestine flights over Soviet territory were 'a distasteful but vital necessity'. Although he added that they had been suspended and would not be resumed in his own time as President, he said he could not bind his successor. Khrushchev was not in a mood to appreciate this constitutional nicety. The decision to stop 'piratical flights', he said, should be the political decision of a Government and not the personal decision of an individual.

From Paris Khrushchev went on to Berlin; and his speech there was awaited with anxiety. But although he said some harsh things, especially about Adenauer and Mayor Brandt, they were no harder than usual. He presented no new threat about Berlin and even reduced the old threat by further postponing it. He expressed his hope that the summit con-

ference would come about in 6 to 8 months, and said that then the Soviet Government would work out a peaceful solution of the Berlin question with 'our Western partners'. Until such time the status quo in Berlin would be respected. He expressed the hope that America, which had produced great presidents like Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln and Roosevelt, would choose a worthy successor to Eisenhower, Khrushchev then affirmed that the Soviet Union would continue to pursue a policy of peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist systems. He denied that he had any intention of reviving the cold war and asserted that his objective continued to be to reduce tension. His speech in Berlin was certainly designed to do so.

THE VENDETTA AGAINST EISENHOWER

On 28 May, Khrushchev made his report to the nation on the latest events. The nation was represented by a couple of thousand shock workers, summoned to Moscow from all parts of the Soviet Union. The meeting was held in the Kremlin and diplomats were invited to attend.

Khrushchev's speech was not inconsistent with the one he made in Berlin a few days previously, but was different in tone. Now he dealt more with personalities than with politics. He was completely disenchanted with Eisenhower, who, although a man of peace, had allowed himself to be overborne by certain ugly elements in American society. The road to hell was paved with good intentions-and that was where Eisenhower would go! Even according to American newspapers Lisenhower had two occupations: golf and the Presidency. Evidently the former was more important to him than the latter. In those circumstances, the Soviet Government simply did not know with whom it could deal in the USA. However, the hope was expressed that one day a President would arise who would not only believe in but enforce peace and peaceful coexistence.

At a press conference held a few days later Khrushchev pursued his vendetta against Eisenhower. He said that Eisenhower had shown himself to be a man of no will-power at all. At the Geneva conference of 1955 he had been completely under the thumb of Dulles. Whenever any question was put to Eisenhower, Dulles would scribble a note and pass it on to him, and all that the President did was to read it out. And now, although John Foster Dulles was dead there was still Allen Dulles. If Eisenhower applied for a job in the USSR he would be appointed president of a children's home. He would not be harmful to children, but it was dangerous for such a man to be put in a position of great power.

This campaign was typical of Khrushchev's temperament. He genuinely felt that he had been let down by the President. Eisenhower's statement regarding the flights over the Soviet Union was a slap in the face and Khrushchev was no believer in turning the other cheek. When he was in France, he had been asked for his views on Christianity. He said he had no quarrel with Christianity; indeed, it had a good deal in common with communism; but he could not agree with the doctrine of turning the other cheek. 'If someone were to slap my cheek,' said Khrushchev, 'I would chop his head off.' Which was precisely what he would have liked to do to Eisenhower. After the meeting at Camp David, Khrushchev had extolled Eisenhower, even in Peking, as a man of peace. Now he was determined to debunk him, not merely in the eyes of the world, but in the eye of history.

Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd, Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd.

Khrushchev showed that a man-and a nation-scorned can be an equal fury.

THE SINO-SOVIET RIFT

For some time there had been indications that the Government of China was not in sympathy with the Soviet Government's policy of reducing international tension. In particular, the Chinese did not share the Soviet view that war is not inevitable. The Chinese contended that until the capitalist system came to an end, wars of one kind or another were bound to happen. Such wars would result in the speedy destruction of 'capitalistic monsters' but not in the annihilation of mankind. Only when the socialist revolution was victorious throughout the world could there be a world free from war, a world without arms. In the meantime to be afraid of war and to oppose all wars, even just wars, was to bind one's hands and feet.

Another problem on which the Chinese disagreed with Soviet theoreticians was whether a peaceful transition to socialism is possible. 'This,' said the Red Flag, 'is sheer nonsense and pure deception. Some people, who are not revisionists but well-intentioned persons who want to be Marxists, are confused in the face of certain new historical phenomena and have a number of incorrect ideas.' Evidently, the reference was to the Soviet Prime Minister. In effect China was accusing Soviet leadership of the heresy of deviationism and proclaiming herself the guardian of the true faith.

Such criticism could not remain unanswered for long. An important article appeared in Pravdu on 13 June, the fortieth anniversary of the publication of an article by Lenin called 'Infantile Disorders and Left-Wing Communism'. The Pravda article criticized those who thought that because they had power in their hands they could introduce communism immediately, avoiding the historical processes of development. To try to do so would be like trying to teach higher mathematics to a four-year-old child. The reference

was to the 'great leap forward' by which the Chinese hoped to attain communism in one jump by the adoption of such things as communes which the Soviet Union had tried and discarded.

Pravda pointed out that Lenin had always advocated a creative approach to Marxism. Although 'some persons' treated peaceful coexistence as a retreat from Marxist-Leninist positions, Lenin himself thought otherwise. Lenin had said that compromise with other groups and parties was often justifiable. 'After all,' said Pravda, 'all dividing lines in nature and in society are mutable.'

An effective rebuttal of the Chinese attitude was made at the Bucharest congress. Lenin, said Khrushchev, was 'our lodestar in theory and practice', but a great deal had happened since Lenin's time. The communist countries, led by the USSR, had emerged as a powerful force for peace. The strength of the Soviet Union was demonstrated during the Suez crisis, when war was averted by a Soviet ultimatum. After all, the imperialists did not want to pull the trigger of war merely to perish in it. Within the capitalist countries themselves, the working classes had become stronger and more vocal. Moreover, a number of countries had recently become independent, determined not to allow themselves to be used as 'a hinterland for launching wars'. Thus conditions had changed since Lenin's declaration regarding the inevitability of war. And yet 'some people' had the habit of quoting Lenin mechanically. Should Lenin rise from his grave, he would surely pull the ears of such people and teach them to understand the essence of things. It was not enough to read the words of Marx and Lenin, but it was necessary to understand them and to apply them properly to contemporary conditions. It was necessary that people should 'think for themselves, study life, analyse the present situation and draw conclusions useful to the common cause of communism.

This was another step in the process of adjusting theory to facts. It constituted a firm challenge to the Chinese interpretation of Leninism. It provided a theoretical basis for

the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence. The USA and the USSR, said the Soviet Prime Minister, are great world powers. History has assigned a place to both. Only madmen would in the present circumstances, call for a war between them; and peace depends on their willingness to coexist.

KHRUSHCHEV AT THE UN

Assembly of the UN in October 1960. His reception in the USA was very different from what had been accorded to him in the previous year. It showed the extent to which Soviet-American relations had been embittered by the U-2 incident. The Soviet delegation was practically confined to Manhattan. The New Yorker described Castro and Khrushchev as 'mountebanks, goons and thieves'. Placards appeared such as 'Drop dead, you bum', and leading articles with such titles as: 'Will Mr Khrushchev die this week?'. Herblock published a cartoon showing Khrushchev, and he found it impossible to adhere to the principle which he himself had laid down on his arrival in New York that 'in politics one must not give way to emotion or sentiment'.

Khrushchev failed conspicuously to reduce international tension, or to revive, in the slightest degree, the atmosphere which existed before the U-2 flight. He overshot the mark in his intemperate attack on Hammarskjold; and his demand for the abolition of the post of Secretary-General of the UN found little response. And none of the resolutions which he put forward, except the one on colonialism, was passed

by the General Assembly.

Even this resolution produced a mixed reception. Khrushchev often overshot the mark. Even Sekou Touré, generally regarded as the most pro-communist among the African leaders, exhorted the communists not to smother

the debates with propaganda and feed the fires of discontent, but to let colonialism, doomed anyhow, pass out in an at-

mosphere of peace and understanding.

The Soviet Prime Minister was at his best in impressing on the General Assembly the urgency for disarmament. 'We will not be bullied,' he said, 'we will not be scared. Our economy is flourishing, our technology is on a steep upturn, our working class is united in full solidarity. You want to compete with us in the arms race? Well, we will beat you. Rocket production is now a matter of mass delivery - like sausages coming out of an automatic machine. Of course, you are going to complain all over the place, "Khrushchev is threatening!" Well, he is not threatening. He is really predicting the future. . . . The arms race will go on, and this will bring about war, and in that war you will lose, and many of those sitting here will not be found any longer. . . . You are accustomed to listen to words that lull you. But Khrushchev does not wish to pat your heads when the world is on the verge of catastrophe. You want to listen to pleasant words. Well, if these words are unpleasant, that means I have achieved my purpose. That is exactly what I intend.'

Khrushchev's manners were, to put it mildly, unparliamentary, and reports of the way in which he took off his shoes and banged on the table at a meeting of the General Assembly travelled round the world. Nevertheless, he did succeed in producing an impression on the UN. As the London *Economist* put it: 'Khrushchev's earthy, human and rather attractive gusto for life was a startling contrast

to Eisenhower's thin-blooded manner'.

THE COMMUNIST MANIFFSTO

A great conclave of communist leaders, attended by representatives of 81 communist parties, was held in Moscow in November 1960 in commemoration of the 43rd anniversary

of the Revolution. Its main purpose was to reconcile the ideological differences which had arisen between the Soviet Union and China. At the same time, a plan of action was drawn up not merely for communist states, but for communist parties even in non-communist countries. The manifesto issued on this occasion was a document of great significance.

An observer called this document 'a Russian dish flavoured with Chinese pepper'. Perhaps the most peppery passage was the attack on US imperialism. It was described as 'the chief bulwark of world reaction, an international gendarme and enemy of the peoples of the whole world'. This was perhaps the price which had to be paid for securing Chinese acquiescence in the Soviet interpretation of fundamental ideological questions. At the same time it reflected the renewed intensity of the cold war as a result of the U-2 incident.

The main difference between the USSR and China was that the latter still believed in the theory that war is inevitable. The Soviet representative admitted that there was still a danger of war, for imperialism had not yet lost its teeth, and as long as imperialism existed, there was need for vigilance. Nevertheless, the Soviet Government adhered to the proposition proclaimed at the Twentieth Congress that there is no fatal inevitability about war. Capitalism was doomed and communism would triumph, but not as a result of a series of wars, as Marx had predicted, but by the demonstration of its economic superiority over capitalism.

The statement was emphatic regarding the need for peaceful coexistence. 'Peaceful coexistence of countries with different systems, or all-destructive war—that is the alternative today. There is no other alternative.' Far from weakening socialism, as the Chinese had feared, the pursuit of peaceful coexistence raised the influence, prestige and authority of socialist states throughout the world. Communists were asked to remember that it was their historical mission not merely to abolish poverty and the exploitation of man by man, but, in our own time, to deliver mankind once and for all from the nightmare of war. To this great historical

mission, communists were called upon to devote every ounce of their strength.

The statement was particularly perspicacious in dealing with the problem of newly independent states. It recognized that nations could achieve independence through armed struggle or by 'non-military methods'. Perhaps the man who drafted the statement had India and non-violence in mind, but it would have been un-Marxist to exalt or even to recognize non-violence. Hence the phrase 'non-military methods'. Whether violence or non-military methods were more useful depended upon the conditions in each country.

The statement clearly laid down that the 'choice of the path of development in any country is the internal affair of the people themselves'. The hope was expressed, however, that the people would realize that the best way in which they could go forward was by following the path of 'non-capitalist development'. It is noteworthy that in this context the word used was not 'communist' but 'non-capitalist'. The statement defined an independent national democracy thus: 'A state which consistently upholds its political and economic independence, fights against imperialism and its military blocs, and against military bases on its territory: a state which fights against the new forms of colonialism and the penetration of imperialistic capital; a state which rejects dictatorial and despotic methods of government; a state in which the people are ensured broad democratic rights and freedoms (freedom of speech, the press, assembly and demonstrations, and freedom to establish political parties and social organizations), the opportunity to work for the enactment of agrarian reforms and other democratic and social changes, and for participation in shaping government policy.' This is an almost perfect description of India, as envisaged by Jawaharlal Nehru. Towards such states the communist parties were advised to adopt a co-operative attitude. It was their duty to support the national governments of such states but, at the same time, to oppose any anti-democratic actions on their part.

The statement also contained an important declaration regarding the attitude which socialist governments should adopt towards the economic development of countries which had recently attained independence. It was advisable to give comprehensive aid to these states to enable them to create national industries, strengthen the national economy and train up national cadres. This was very different from the attitude of China, which had been objecting to the grant of economic assistance to bourgeois states on the ground that it would act as a damper to the revolutionary spirit of

the people and hamper the growth of communism.

The primacy of the Soviet Union in the communist world was fully acknowledged. A distinction was drawn between the Soviet Union which was successfully carrying out the full-scale construction of communist society, and other countries which were still laying the foundations of socialism or developing socialistic activities. Not a word was said about the Chinese communes or the Great Leap Forward. On the contrary, there was implicit condemnation of overhasty methods in a passage which said that production in 'the socialist commonwealth' should be regulated in such a way that the interests of each country were reconciled with the interests of the whole and that all nations would move more or less simultaneously into communism. This innovation to Marxist theory was made in order presumably to show the Soviet Union's distrust of the Chinese attempt precipitately to overtake all other states. 'The communist and workers' parties,' said the statement, 'unanimously declare that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has been and remains the universally recognized vanguard of the world communist movement, being the most experienced and steeled contingent of the international communist movement."

On the whole, the communist manifesto issued in 1960 vindicated the Soviet attitude towards peace and coexistence. It also corroborated the Soviet interpretation of Marxism. During and after the Twentieth Congress a great deal had

been done to bring Marxism into accord with the realities of the nuclear age. A lot of dead wood had been chopped off from the tree of Marxism, with the result that it yielded more serviceable timber for the construction of communism and a world without war.

THE RAMAYANA IN MOSCOW

Diplomatic parties are sometimes enjoyable and often a bore both to the giver and the receiver. One of the most enjoyable parties which we gave was in honour of the staging of a new Indian play, based on our ancient epic, the Ramayana, in the Soviet Union. Latterly, Soviet producers had been on the look-out for Indian themes for their plays, operas and ballets. Not long ago a seventh-century play, Mritchakatika, or 'The Toy-cart', was staged in the Pushkin theatre under the title, The White Lotus. Tagore's play. Chitra, was turned into a ballet at Kuibyshev. A modern play, Soni Mahiwal, was shown at the Gipsy theatre in Moscow. Berkut, a teacher at the Lunacharsky Institute of Dramatic Art, turned Nala Damayanti into a ballet; and the music for it was written by a famous Uzbek musician, Ashrafi. Sakuntala was to be staged as a ballet; and Serger Balasanyan, the composer, and Yekaterina Guseva, the writer, proceeded to India to start work on it. In all these ventures, Anujee had been taking a keen interest.

Among our guests at our dinner party on 12 January 1961 were the cast of the Ramayana production, the producer, the writer, the composer, the director of the theatre and the representatives of the Ministry of Culture. Proposing a toast, I said that I would refer to them as the Ramayana Group. I did not know whether they would regard it as a compliment or not, but few words were more sacred to an Indian than Ramayana. Stories from the Ramayana had been heard, read, recited and sung by people of all classes in India for

3000 years. The Ramayana was equal in length to the Iliad and the Odyssey combined. To have reduced such a vast epic to the dimensions of a three-hour play was indeed a remarkable feat, and the choice of an Indian epic demonstrated the catholic tastes of the Soviet public. What was equally remarkable was that the adaptors had succeeded in capturing the spirit of a country separated from Moscow by some 10,000 kilometres and a period separated by some 3000 years.

In concluding the toast I said that the group included a foreigner who did not, however, consider herself a foreigner but identified herself completely with the group and was proud to be regarded as a consultant, namely, my wife. This remark was received with tremendous applause, and many compliments were showered on Anujee. She was given some handsome presents, including an album containing the signatures of all those who took part in the production, and a precious set of porcelain, showing the characters in Pushkin's story, The Golden Cock.

13 A FRESH WIND

KENNEDY BECOMES PRESIDENT

WHEN J. F. Kennedy was elected President of the USA, the Soviet Prime Minister sent him a message of congratulations, in the course of which he expressed the hope that in his time Soviet-American relations would be restored to what they were in Roosevelt's time. 'A fresh wind,' he said, 'has begun to blow in international relations.' The wind was all the more refreshing when compared with those which had been wafting the evil-smelling odours of the cold war from Laos in Asia, the Congo in Africa and Cuba in Latin America. The last days of Eisenhower's administration were marked by a bout of feverish activity in the wrong direction. US Government severed diplomatic relations with Cuba, hoisted the satellite government of Prince Boun Oum in the place of the much respected government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, and appeared to connive at the fate of Patrice Lumumba at the hands of his bitter enemies, the Katangese. These activities were castigated in pure Billingsgate by Soviet newspapers, which took care, however, to pin the blame on the Eisenhower government rather than on the USA as a whole, thus leaving the door ajar for expected improvement under Kennedy.

Not all communist states, however, expected improvement as the result of Kennedy's advent. Newspapers in Peking said that the election was merely the replacement of one champion of monopoly capitalism by another, and by one who had at one time supported McCarthy. Albania denounced not only Kennedy, but his father, who was said to have been a friend of Hitler. The Soviet attitude was very different.

True, during the elections, the Soviet press described Kennedy and Nixon as 'a pair of political twins', but that was partly a matter of tactics, for had the Soviet Government supported Kennedy, he might have lost. On Kennedy's inauguration as President, Khrushchev sent him a message of congratulations as cordial as that sent on his election. His inspiring inaugural address was published in full in Izvestia, the Government paper. Pravda, the Party paper, also published the bulk of it, but left out such bits as the danger of old-style colonialism being replaced by a more iron tyranny. Despite such passages, Pravda saw in Kennedy's address a new and more hopeful trend in the relations between the two countries.

Two days after the inauguration, a two-hour talk took place between Khrushchev and Thompson, the US Ambassador. The next day the pilots of RB-47 were released and Kennedy declared that he had ordered that U-2 flights should not be resumed. The new government's decision to postpone for a month the talks on nuclear tests so as to give itself more time to study the question in all its aspects was appreciated in the Soviet Union. And a meeting between the President and Khrushchev, which Eisenhower elaborately avoided after the U-2 affair, now became a possibility. On the whole, a fresh wind had begun to blow, very different from the wind which blew when Dulles ruled foreign policy, alive or dead:

The wind that sends your ship in circles, The wind that neither drives out Death Nor brings in Summer.

A VILE DEED

The fresh wind which rose on Kennedy's inauguration continued to blow during the first few months, though with

slightly reduced velocity. His State of the Union message received wide publicity in the USSR and was thought to reveal a more realistic approach than that of his predecessor. Eisenhower had said, only a few days earlier, that the nation had reached 'new heights' in the economic sphere, but Kennedy declared that the American people were living in 'an hour of national peril'. This, said the Soviet press, showed that Kennedy was lacking in neither courage nor objectivity. But his comments on foreign affairs were less welcome. His emphasis on the need to revive American military strength and his call for an accelerated missile programme and increased production of Polaris submarines armed with nuclear rockets showed how difficult it was even for the new President to give up the policy of acting from strength, even though that policy had demonstrably failed in the time of his predecessor. However, the tone of Soviet criticism was remarkably moderate.

The entire international atmosphere, however, was suddenly poisoned by the murder of Lumumba. As soon as the news came. Soviet newspapers wrote vehement articles with such headlines as 'A Sea of Wrath', 'Colonialists or Pharisees?' and 'Butchers to Book'. A mass demonstration took place in front of the Belgian Embassy; some violence was used and a few window-panes were broken; the Belgian Ambassador slept with a revolver by his side; and I received a telegram from Gladys, his charming wife and a fellow Travancorean, inquiring about his health. In a government statement, the responsibility for the murder was placed squarely on the colonialists, and on the Belgians in the first instance. It was pointed out that Katanga was still occupied by Belgians and was being governed from Brussels with Belgian money and Belgian officers, who formed the hard core of Tshombe's armed gangs. The statement charged Belgium's allies with obstructing, in the UN and outside. all proposals for restoring the unity and independence of the Congo. The crime of Lumumba's murder was prepared methodically, it said, step by step, by the colonialists, who

did not realize that it would sow 'seeds of unquenchable

hate' in the hearts of generations of Africans.

The Soviet Government moved a resolution in the Security Council, denouncing Belgium's 'international crime' and calling for the punishment of Tshombe and Mobutu, the disarming of their military units and the withdrawal of all Belgians from the Congo. It also demanded that the UN operations should be terminated within one month and that the Congolese people should be left free to solve their problems in their own way. Above all, the Soviet Government recognized the government of Antoine Gizenga and declared its determination to help it in every possible way. This move was countered by the declaration of the US Government that it continued to recognize Kasavubu's government and that it would resist any unilateral intervention from any quarter in the affairs of the Congo.

In the midst of this tumult there was considerable rejoicing over the latest Soviet achievement in space On 4 March the Soviet Union launched a multistage rocket heavier than any launched so far, 6483 kilograms in weight. This feat was followed, a week later, by the launching from a sputnik of a guided space rocket, which set off an automatic interplanetary station on a four months' flight to Venus. This achievement was hailed throughout the world as opening a new chapter in interplanetary travel. Despite renewed croakings about the 'missile gap' between the USA and the USSR Kennedy sent a gracious message of congratulations to the Soviet Prime Minister, to which he returned an equally gracious reply. It was good to see that at least in the heavenly sphere there was harmony between the two earthly giants.

HOPEFUL SIGNS

Kennedy had inherited a dismal legacy from John Foster Dulles. Nevertheless, signs were not wanting that in his time there would be an improvement in the international

atmosphere.

It had been feared that the murder of Lumumba would cause an irreparable rift, but both sides took care that it did not do so. Although on Lumumba's death the Soviet Government recognized Gizenga's government, it abstained from unilateral intervention. And the US Government declared its adherence to the resolution of the Security Council which made it incumbent on the United Nations to bring about the national integrity and independence of the Congo.

In Algeria, peace talks were about to begin. De Gaulle took note of the events of 11 December, when the insurgent Muslim population of Algiers smashed once and for all the fiction of a 'French Algeria', and declared that 'the proper role of the French Army is to be on the Rhine, and not to

play nursemaid to the people of Algeria'.

The Commonwealth shed a diseased and incurable limb, South Africa. The UN condemned South Africa's attempts to annex South-West Africa and the USA voted in favour of this resolution.

In the teeth of opposition from Portugal, a NATO ally, the USA also voted in favour of an inquiry into conditions in Angola. Adlai Stevenson, the US Ambassador to the UN, recalled the noble words of Jefferson: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.' By its vote over Angola, the US Government went far to undo the deplorable impression created by US abstention from the Afro-Asian resolution on colonialism which had been passed unanimously at the October session of the General Assembly. Thus it seemed that under Kennedy America was beginning to prove true to its heritage as the world's first anti-colonial power-a heritage on which Dulles, in his zeal to get whatever allies or satellites he could in his anticommunist crusade, had often turned his back. Towards nonaligned states, in particular, the US Government now adopted a new and refreshing attitude, epitomized by Kennedy's declaration that his goal in Laos was 'a genuinely neutral and independent state'.

FLARE-UP IN LAOS

In the last days of Eisenhower's presidency a serious crisis had developed in Laos as a result of the flagrant intervention of the US Government in its internal affairs. Prince Souvanna Phouma, who had been trying to steer the country on the path of neutralism in the midst of various conflicting currents, was overthrown, and one General Phoumi Nosavan. aided and abetted by American authorities, set himself up as the saviour of Laos. Initially Phoumi Nosavan had some successes, but not for long. He was unable to resist the advance of the Pathet Lao, which had received a fair quantity of Soviet military equipment, ostensibly meant for the legal. though ousted, Prime Minister of Laos. The troops of General Phoumi Nosavan, the 'strong man' of Laos whom the USA had boosted, had little morale left; there were many desertions to the rebels, and Pathet Lao controlled the approaches to the royal capital. Faced with this crisis Kennedy affirmed that he would use every means at his disposal to prevent a communist take-over. Fifteen helicopters and over two hundred military 'instructors' were sent to Laos. (In view of the size of the royalist army, said Pravda, this meant that almost every platoon would be commanded by a American officer!) More sinister, there were reports of other American troop movements in the Far East and South-East Asia. Two thousand marines were said to have been recalled from Japan and Okinawa and three aircraft-carriers and several other warships were on their way to Indo-China. Kennedy seemed to be walking to the brink of war even as Dulles had done on the eve of the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

Kennedy, however, was not Dulles. He had no rooted antipathy to the policy of neutrality which certain states

had elected to follow. Having thwarted the prospect of a forcible take-over by the Pathet Lao, Kennedy unequivocally declared that his goal in Laos was simply a genuinely neutral and independent state.

The British, too, bestirred themselves. On 25 March, they proposed that there should be an immediate cease-fire in Laos, that India should be requested to reconvene the International Commission and that this could be followed by the conference which the Soviet Government had been urging all along. In an interview with the Soviet Prime Minister, I communicated Nehru's view that the British proposals were constructive and that they seemed to meet the Soviet demands substantially. Nehru urged acceptance of the proposals to prevent a serious flare-up in South-East Asia and beyond.

Khrushchev at once agreed that the proposals were constructive and could be the basis for a solution. He also said that Kennedy's acecptance of the neutrality of Laos was a new and significant step. After all, he said, Laos was a small country and, whether it chose to remain neutral like Cambodia or in the Western camp like Thailand, it could not tilt the scales for or against communism. The struggle between communism and capitalism would be decided by the operation of great historical forces and not by what happened in some small country here or there. The only question of principle involved, he said, was that if the people of Laos wished to be neutral they should be helped to remain so. Khrushchev deplored the show of military force in which the Americans had been indulging. 'If they want a second Korea,' he said, 'they will get it; only it will be worse, and more bloody, than before.' Khrushchev repeated that it was not through blood that mankind should advance towards communism; it would arrive in its own way and in its own time.

THE COSMONAUT

On 12 April, 1961, Anujee and I woke into a perfect day, the harbinger of spring. I noticed that there was no trace of snow anywhere, even last week's fall had melted away, and we wondered how many years would pass before we saw snow again. There was not a cloud in the sky and the grass on our lawn was beginning to show signs of life. Anuice and I began the day by guessing the temperature, a daily pastime. I said it was zero and Anujee said it was two degrees above. I looked at the thermometer outside my dressingroom window; it was indeed plus two. After a bath Anuice settled down to her prayers and I gave the finishing touches to a speech which I had to make the next day when Moscow University conferred on me an honorary doctorate in the historical sciences. (I was told that this was the first time in the history of the University that a diplomat had been thus honoured.) Altogether it looked like a good day, but we did not suspect that it was also to be a great day, one of the greatest in the world's annals. It was soon after breakfast that we first heard that a man had flown into space and around the earth and had returned safely. 'Years and centuries will pass,' as Pravda said with a rare rhetorical flourish, but the shining glory of this day will never fade.'

All morning we hugged our radio and television set. Details of this epoch-making flight came in thick and fast. Major Yuri Gagarin took off at 9.07 a.m. in a spaceship, attached to a rocket weighing 4725 kilograms. At 9.52 he was flying over South America, when he reported that the flight was proceeding normally, and that he was feeling fine. At 10.15 he was over Africa and reported that he was bearing weightlessness well. By 10.25 he had flown round the earth and at 10.55 he landed at a predetermined spot. Thus he hurtled round the world at a speed of 17,000 miles an hour in a hundred minutes. Those hundred minutes, said

Alexander Nesmeyanov, President of the Academy of Sciences, have shaken the world.

Naturally there was much rejoicing in Russia. The newspapers recalled that the Soviet Union was the first to fire an ICBM, the first to launch an artificial earth satellite, the first to land on the moon and unveil its hidden half, the first to create an artificial satellite of the sun and the first to launch a spaceship towards Venus. The Central Committee of the Communist Party, the Council of Ministers and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet issued a statement hailing Gagarin's achievement as 'a triumph of the human mind' and 'an unparalleled victory of man over the forces of nature'. The flight was indeed a victory for socialism, but a victory 'not only of our people but of all mankind'. 'We gladly place it,' said the statement, 'at the service of all peoples in the name of the progress, well-being and happiness of all human beings.'

On 14 April Gagarin came to Moscow. It was the most festive day I had seen during my stay of 84 years in Moscow. It was as if May Day and Revolution Day had been combined, for the people gave themselves to delirious rejoicing. Gagarin arrived at Vnukova airport at 12 noon. The road all the way there was lined with crowds holding flowers, flags and portraits. All the members of the Presidium and all heads of diplomatic missions were present to meet him. He got down briskly from the plane and walked, with perfect composure, over a long red carpet towards a platform where the members of the Presidium and his own family were standing. He went straight to Khrushchev and announced in firm clear tones that the mission entrusted to him had been fulfilled. Khrushchev embraced and kissed him, unsuccessfully restraining a tear, and took him to his wife, a homely bespectacled woman, to his father, a carpenter on a collective farm, and to his mother, who was wearing a shawl and looked every inch a peasant. Not an eve on the platform was dry, and there was a hush among the crowd, broken only by the sobs and the sound of the kisses administered full on the mouth in true Russian style. Khrushchev then took Gagarin round and introduced him to the heads of missions. Mrs Khrushchev spotted Anujee at a distance and graciously gave her a bouquet which had been presented to her by the Pioneers.

A small detail which I observed at the airport signified the greatness of the event. For the first time Khrushchev's portrait was not in the centre. Even when a ceremonial reception was for the head of a state, Khrushchev's portrait was normally placed in the middle, with the portrait of the visitor to his right and of the President of the Soviet Union to his left. This practice always reminded me of the headmaster of Eton who insisted on keeping his hat on when showing the Prince of Wales round the school. When asked why he was not sufficiently respectful to the Prince, he replied that he would never be able to maintain discipline once his boys suspected that there was anyone greater than himself. But on this occasion Khrushchev moved from the middle and gave the place of honour to Gagarin.

From the airport there was a triumphal procession to the Red Square where a great meeting was held. Khrushchev spoke with pride of Gagarin's feat: 'His name will become immortal in the history of mankind.' Mrs Gagarin was also praised by him for her superb courage and fortitude. When a man undertook such a flight, he said, no one could guarantee that it would not be the last in his life. Gagarin replied with

appropriate humility.

There followed a number of civilian processions, which had converged from all quarters of the city to pay homage to 'the Columbus of Space'; and they were still continuing when Gagarin was rushed off to the Kremlin for a magnificent reception. There, amidst tremendous applause, the Order of Lenin, the Order of the Hero of the Soviet Union and the Order of the Space Pilot were conferred on him. This was followed by many toasts and a splendid concert, and in the streets there was dancing and merry-making till the small hours.

At noon the next day Gagarin related his experiences at a press conference, where he answered, and sometimes skilfully parried, the questions put to him. His flight round the earth was by no means a passive affair. He was working all the time-looking after the equipment of the spaceship, observing the environment, recording his observations in the log-book, reporting them to the earth and maintaining communication with the earth through a number of channels. Weightlessness did not affect his capacity to work. When he entered outer space he felt that the back of the chair to which he had been tied was slipping away; and when he raised his hand and tried to drop the pencil it would not drop. But this state of weightlessness did not affect his capacity to think and work. When he spoke of the things he saw, which no other man had ever seen, there was poetry in what he said. From a height of 300 kilometres he could still see the earth, with its great mountains, big rivers, its coast-lines and its islands. When he emerged into space, the earth was surrounded by a blue halo and the colour of the sky gradually changed, from a delicate light blue, through aquamarine, dark blue and violet, into inky black. Against this background the never-fading stars were brighter and clearer than they had ever appeared to the eyes of man, and the sun was ten times brighter.

The Russians received congratulations from statesmen and scientists all the world over. The Americans took the news calmly and showed little of that nervousness which gripped them when the first sputnik was launched. Kennedy sent a gracious message; a suggestion was made that Gagarin should be invited to the USA and given a royal reception; and the President of the National Art Club proposed that a great work of art, commemorating the historic occasion, should be presented to the Soviet people. Lesser men, however, were inclined to pooh-pooh the Russian achievement. David Lawrence of the Vew York Herald Tribune asserted that it was 'by no means the greatest achievement in history'; after all, the U-2 flight was equally great, if not greater! The

New York Post called the feat 'not a victory but a tragedy' which gave mankind a feeling of neither pride nor consolation. The Telegraph and Sun observed that 'Russia could now wipe us off the face of the earth and the first manned space flight is a purely military move towards this goal'.

Izvestia remarked that such comments were reminiscent

of Othello's despairing cry,

It is the very error of the moon; She comes more near the earth than she was wont. And makes men mad.

—But no! It was not that the moon had come nearer the earth but that a man of the earth had risen to the moon and to the stars. It was that that made some men mad.

THE CUBAN CRISIS

The world seems destined perpetually to pass from one crisis to another. Hardly was the crisis in Laos over when an equally serious crisis arose in Cuba. On 18 April, the Soviet Government sent a message to the US Government protesting against armed gangs, equipped and financed in the USA, flying in American planes and dropping American bombs on Cuban cities. This action did not fit in with the assurances that the USA would not participate in any military action against Cuba, which the US Ambassador, Llewellyn Thompson, had given on Kennedy's behalf a few days earlier. The USA was warned that military techniques were such that in the present state of international tension a little war could evoke a general conflagration. 'You cannot put out a fire in one region and light a fire in another.' American support for the invasion had caused much indignation in the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Government would render all help to the Government of Cuba in its efforts to repulse the attack.

Kennedy's reply was short and sharp. He said that the US Government would resist any outside intervention in the Western hemisphere. He reiterated his previous statement that there would be no invasion by US armed forces and that American nationals would not be involved in an affair which was essentially a quarrel between the Cubans themselves. But he did not conceal his sympathy and admiration for 'the Cuban patriots who were struggling to overthrow tyranny'. The Soviet Government, he said, might believe that the Cuban developments were part of the historically inevitable communist revolution. What it believed was its own business, but what it did was the world's business.

American conduct in Cuba roused grave apprehensions throughout the world. So far, India had followed with great appreciation the broad lines of Kennedy's policy, which seemed far more sensible and resilient than that of his predecessor. India's regret was therefore the greater over the Cuban adventure. Nehru took note of Kennedy's assurance that he would prevent an armed invasion, but he found it difficult to square this statement with the encouragement

and supply of arms and training to Cuban exiles.

On 20 April, when I was sitting in a luxurious IL-18 plane at an aircraft factory near Moscow, having drinks with Smeliakov, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade, and Voronin, the director of the factory, news came that Castro had inflicted a crushing defeat on the rebels. Thereupon Kennedy issued an angry statement, declaring that he did not intend to abandon Cuba to the communists, restating the Monroe Doctrine in uncompromising terms, and dwelling on the hypocrisy of those 'whose character was stamped for ever on the bloody streets of Budapest' and yet who dared to lecture him on the iniquity of intervention. This statement reflected, and was designed to meet, the mood of indignation and frustration of the American public, which had been shocked as much by the American reverse in Cuba as by Soviet success in space. However, before long the people on both sides and indeed throughout the world were

reassured by an announcement that President Kennedy and Prime Minister Khrushchev would be meeting in Vienna in June.

THE LAMP AND THE LAMPSTAND

The last function which I attended in Moscow before I retired at the end of May, 1961, was one in honour of the centenary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore. It was held in the Bolshoi theatre. A number of speeches were made on the various aspects of Tagore's art, he who was at once poet, painter, patriot, nationalist, internationalist, educationist and social worker. Some of the speakers dwelt on Tagore's visit to the Soviet Union in 1930. What had impressed him most on that occasion was that sureness with which the so-called lower orders of Russian society were beginning to acquire a new dignity and a new status. Tagore used to compare civilization with a lamp. The mass of nameless people at the bottom was the lampstand; it bore on its head the lamp of civilization which shone on a few individuals but hardly shone on themselves. On the contrary, the lampstand was even stained by the oil which dripped from the lamp. In Russia, however, Tagore felt that the entire society was being illumined with the light of knowledge.

The lamp and the lampstand: the state and the people! What a fascinating subject for the poet, the philosopher or the historian! In different periods of history, the monarchy, the aristocracy or the plutocracy has, in its own name or in the name of democracy, considered itself the lamp and has regarded the people as the stand that upholds it. In Russia in 1917, the people for the first time seized power; it was as

if the lampstand had taken possession of the lamp.

Even in post-revolutionary Russia the distinction between the lamp and the lampstand has persisted in fact if not in theory, for the state has not withered away. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that in the mid-twentieth century the lampstand has begun to share the lustre of the lamp to a greater extent than ever before. Throughout the world, even in Africa, people are no longer content to live in darkness, political or intellectual; they want to be both dispensers and receivers of light. In the contest between the East and the West victory will go ultimately to that side which gives greater, more sympathetic and more disinterested assistance to these peoples.

Part 2



1 IN AND AROUND MOSCOW

THE LENIN MAUSOLEUM

In Moscow my first visit was to the Kremlin to present my credentials to President Shvernik; my second, to the Lenin Mausoleum. It was late autumn. Winter was approaching and had already sent its herald in the form of a premature fall of snow. But, like a conqueror who is a little unsure of himself and of the reception he is likely to get, winter seemed to be hesitating whether to burst in and settle down for the season or whether to withdraw for a while and come back later in full force. The air was damp and the roads were slushy. The dismal weather, however, did not affect the perpetual flow of pilgrims to the shrine of Lenin. Stretching through the Red Square and at right angles to it, there was a long queue of men, women and children, who had been waiting patiently for hours to be ushered into the presence of Lenin for the prescribed two minutes.

At the entrance to the Mausoleum we were received by the Chief of Protocol. Two sentries, who had been standing motionless outside the mausoleum and looked as if they had been carved into the wall, sprang to life and saluted. We were then taken slowly to a subterrancan chamber. There lay Lenin in a glass case, brilliantly flood-lit. Involuntarily I held my breath. He seemed to be not dead but asleep; not even asleep, but resting. Resting with a quizzical expression on his face; resting, as he deserved to rest, after letting loose the spirit of revolution on his people and, as he had hoped, on the entire human race.

I laid a wreath, made of chrysanthemums, on Lenin's

tomb. It bore the inscription: 'To the undying memory of V. I. Lenin from K. P. S. Menon, Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union.' I gave my full designation, for I was told that the ribbon which bore the inscription would be detached and kept permanently in the Lenin Museum. Thus, in paying homage to the immortal memory of Lenin, I have also immortalized myself!

Prakash Kaul, who lunched at the American Embassy, told me that his hosts were intrigued at the thought that the Ambassador of India should have laid a wreath on Lenin's tomb. 'Was India definitely going Red?' they asked. I saw no reason why I should not lay a wreath on Lenin's tomb, even as I had laid a wreath on Sun Yat-sen's tomb at Nanking and as all new Heads of Missions in India lay wreaths, soon after they present credentials, at Mahatma Gandhi's samadhi. Surely, Lenin is as much a father of the Soviet people as Gandhiji is of ours.

Leaving Lenin's body we proceeded to see the graves of other revolutionaries in the compound. Among them were Krupskaya, Lenin's wife; Kalinin, a lathe operator in Leningrad who became the Head of the Soviet State; Zdanov, who created the Cominform after the war and applied the most rigid communist standards to art and literature; Dzerzhinsky, a co-worker of Stalin in his early days and Minister for Internal Security in the first Soviet government; General Frunze, who played an important part in the Civil War following the Revolution; and Maxim Gorki, the great writer.

Among them, none is worthier than Krupskaya, a revolutionary in her own right and distinguished educationist. The spirit of this woman may be seen from her exhortation to the people after Lenin's death:

Comrades, men and women workers; men and women peasants! I have a favour to ask from you. Do not pay external respect to Lenin's personality. Do not build statues in his memory. He cared for none of these things in his life. Remember, there is much ruin and poverty in this country. If you want to honour the

name of Lenin, build children's homes, kindergarten schools, libraries, hospitals, homes for the crippled and for other defectives.

Evidently, Stalin was not in agreement with her, for when I went to the Soviet Union, the land was littered with statues and other memorials, not merely to Lenin, but, in equal profusion, to Stalin himself.

ZAGORSK

In the last week of November, 1952, we went to Zagorsk. It was a bleak, wintry day. Many people prefer to do the trip in the spring or early summer; then the journey which took us four hours should not take more than two. The road was cut up by the snow and, in some places, covered with ice, so much so that we felt that we were driving on glass. The cold was intense; it was 50 below zero; and the sun was hardly visible. At midday the sun emitted no more heat and light than in the morning or in the evening. The sky and the earth seemed made of the same substance, only differing in the degree of its thickness and whiteness. There was no such distinction as in India between the brown earth and blue sky; here both were grey and white; the one seemed to merge into the other as inseparably as the faces of Lenin and Stalin in the composite portraits of theirs which are scattered all over Russia.

Despite its discomforts, the journey was memorable. For one thing, we saw General Winter in all his majesty. The entire earth seemed to belong to him; indeed, it did not look like the solid earth but rather like the milky sea of Hindu mythology, suddenly frozen at the General's command. From this sea of snow stood out, here and there, a handful of trees, ghosts of their former selves, leadess and lifeless. There also peeped out a few huts, dots on an infinity of snow. Now one understands why Hitler and Napoleon quailed before General Winter and why their armies, decimated,

retreated into their homelands. I wish someone would make a statue of General Winter as Mme Mukhina has done of Industry and Agriculture. That statue, in which Industry and Agriculture are represented by a man and a woman, surging forward with vigour and movement and carrying the hammer and the sickle, stands on the outskirts of Moscow.

The last part of the journey was more interesting than the first. I was specially attracted by a town called Pushkin with a beautiful old church dominating it. The very name attracted Did it have anything to do with Pushkin, the great Russian poet, I wondered. Last week I saw a portrait of him on the mantlepiece of Zallaka, the Ethiopian Minister in Moscow. Was he a special admirer of Pushkin? I asked. 'Yes,' he said; 'moreover, Pushkin was half Ethiopian.' Then I came to know that his grandfather was an Ethiopian slave who had been bought in Constantinople by a Russian noble and presented to Peter the Great. Peter looked after him well and had him educated; and Pushkin was his grandson. Was his oriental ancestry, I asked myself, responsible for the tumult in his blood—a tumult which gave such pathos to his life and such beauty to his poetry?

After we had done about forty miles we had our first glimpse of Zagorsk. It was most impressive. There loomed in the distance a hilltop, covered with towers, turrets and domes. The road suddenly dipped, causing this apparition of architectural beauty to vanish; and then, equally suddenly, it rose again, enabling us to take in the details. In the centre was a tower which rose above, but did not dwarf or dominate, the surrounding buildings. This tower, however, did not belong specially to Russia; it could be seen anywhere in Europe or, for that matter, in Asia. It was a late eighteenthcentury addition. The churches, on the contrary, were Russia's own. They had a cluster of bulbous domes, which Westerners call 'onion domes' but which we in the East more respectfully call 'lotus domes'.

This church was very different from any that I had seen before. It had no seats, or pews reserved for the gentry, no organ and no choir. The worshippers were very different from the faithful who assemble in front of a mosque, or the congregation who, dressed up in their Sunday best, go solemnly to church on Sundays. In fact, it was no congregation at all; it did not have that momentary unity which comes over the worshippers in a Muslim mosque or a Christian church. It was rather like a crowd of worshippers in our Hindu temples, each man having no thought of his neighbour or even of himself but only of the God whom he is worshipping. I can never forget the devout looks on the faces of the men and women, mostly women, in the Uspensky cathedral in Zagorsk or the sweetness of their singing: it

seemed to come from the depths of their soul.

Leaving the churches, we visited some of the adjoining museums. One of them contained a collection of Russian handicrafts: another contained objects of interest to students of medieval Russian history. I was interested in two very different objects. One was a book which was kept by Ivan the Terrible and in which he had entered the names of all the men he had killed, beginning with his own son. I was reminded of the banner of Genghiz Khan which I saw when I visited his tomb in Lanchow in 1944 and on which was hung a hair from the head of every one of his innumerable victims. The other object which attracted me was the robe of St Sergei. Looking at this robe I tried to form a mental picture of the man. He appears to have been tall, lanky and emaciated; and his robe of mauve colour, with a blue background, was simplicity itself. Very different were the other embroidered robes which were exhibited in the museum. They were studded with pearls and rubies, emeralds and diamonds; and the mitres were made of gold. The Christianity of Sergei was different from the Christianity of the bishops, even as Roman Christianity was different from the Christianity of the Apostles. Seeing the magnificence of the bishops' and archbishops' robes displayed in the Zagorsk museum, I recalled a famous description of the Papacy: 'The ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting crowned on the grave thereof.'

THE BOLSHOI THEATRE

The Bolshoi theatre was our great joy in Moscow. It must be admited that in our first year we had few other joys in the USSR. The advent of the cold war had cast a shadow over the diplomatic corsp also. Travel was severely restricted. Vast areas were declared out of bounds for foreigners. As Churchill put it in his famous speech at Fulton, where he formally ignited the cold war, an 'iron curtain' had descended on Europe. Even social life was affected. That convivial atmosphere which was prevalent in the Russian and British Consulates in Sinkiang which I visited during the war was now conspicuously absent. India, it is true, sought to keep aloof from the cold war, but at a time when both sides were inclined to see the world in terms of black and white, India was suspected by both sides to be on the wrong side. Even Indians belonging to one political party viewed other Indians with suspicion. For instance, the only two non-official Indians who were in Moscow in my first year there never visited our Embassy, because in their eyes our Embassy was a bourgeois organization! Before very long such infantile suspicions vanished, and our Embassy became a great meeting-place of the East and the West; and I myself was able to travel all over the USSR, from Murmansk on the Arctic Ocean to Baku on the Caspian Sea and from Lake Sevan in Armenia to Lake Baikal in Siberia. But it took a little time for these changes to come about.

In the meantime the Bolshoi theatre was our great refuge from boredom. This is by no means the only theatre in Moscow. Here, more than 30,000 Moscovites go to the theatre every day, except on Mondays when the theatres are closed. There are three dozen theatres in Moscow of different kinds—the Bolshoi and the Fihal, specializing in ballets and operas, the Stanislavsky theatre, the Mayakovsky theatre, the Art theatre, the Satire theatre, the Puppet theatre, the

Gypsy theatre and so on. To us, however, who did not know Russian and were slowly and laboriously beginning to pick it up, the ballet, in which language does not count, was the great attraction. And the Bolshoi is the greatest ballet theatre in the world.

The first ballet which we saw was Romeo and Juliet. Here was an English play, with an Italian setting, transformed into a Russian ballet as if it were native to the soil. Yet it was completely faithful to the original. There were only two material divergences. Paris does not die on the stage, perhaps because the producers thought that he was not even worth the killing. And the balcony scene takes place in an orchard, evidently because a garden lends itself to dancing better than a balcony.

The part of Juliet was taken by Ulanova. I could not believe that she was 42 years old. Not that she looked 14, Juliet's age; the years were beginning to leave a mark even on Ulanova. But age had not withered, nor custom staled, the infinite variety of her movements. Her face, too, was capable of expressing an infinite variety of emotions. And what emotions! Girlish gaiety, the dawn of love, the presentiment of doom, the growth, ecstasy, abandon and anguish of love and the haunting fear of death which closed in on her temporarily, when she took Friar Laurence's potion, and released her from its grip for a few moments, only to show her a death even more terrible than her own, the death of her lover. Ulanova not merely danced the acts and scenes in the play; she danced the very lines of Shakespeare. I had heard many an eminent actress, reciting such beautiful lines as:

It was the nightingale, and not the lark, That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear; Nightly she sings on you pomegranate tree; Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

But no one has squeezed the last ounce of sweetness out of these lines so well as Ulanova did by her mute and mobile eloquence. Romeo and Juliet was very different from what I had imagined a ballet to be. I used to think that a ballet was all dancing and no acting, but here was an acting dance, a dancing drama. It was the antithesis of the style which was praised by Beretta, the Italian dancer, who said that in a ballet drama was just nonsense and that technique was the only thing worth cultivating. I was told that before the Revolution there used to be two rival schools of dancing, the Leningrad school and the Moscow school. The Leningrad school specialized in style and ignored expression, while the Moscow school paid as much attention to expression as to technique. Ulanova resolved this conflict; in her dancing the dramatic and the choreographic elements were perfectly blended.

The ballet was by no means a one-man or one-woman show. The mass scenes reflected the tumult, the brilliance and the decadence of the dying Middle Ages, into which the Renaissance was breaking. Every character in the ballet suited the part to perfection. Romeo was eclipsed by Juliet even as Dushyanta is eclipsed by Shakuntala in Kalidasa's immortal drama. In Shakespeare, as in Kalidasa, the female of the species is lovelier (and in Macbeth, deadher) than the male. I have never seen a more mercurial Mercutio than Koren, who took that part; and the scene of his death, which Shakespeare so heartlessly brought about, was unbearable. True to Shakespeare, he lingered so long over his death that Anujee exclaimed: 'Why doesn't he die?'

Another ballet which we are never tired of seeing is Swan Lake. To a lover of pure ballet Swan Lake is even more satisfying than Romeo and Juliet. The music by Tchaikovsky is sweeter and there is more scope for dancing, especially group dancing, by the Bolshoi's chief glory, the corps de ballet. For a gifted ballerina, there is scope for expression, too. In this ballet there is Odile, the black swan, as well as Odette, the white swan. The white swan represents love in its pure, and therefore, pathetic form; the black swan represents carnal passion, demanding, rapacious, demonic. Plisetskaya, second only to Ulanova, took the part of both the black

swan and the white and did equally well in each. Indeed, when one saw the wicked gleam in her eyes and heard her diabolical laughter at the prince falling bewitched at her feet, one almost thought that she was more effective as the black swan. Ulanova, on the contrary, could never do full justice to the black swan, though she was exquisite as the white swan. Somehow she could not put her heart into that part which she knew did not suit her.

Another interesting ballet we saw was the Fountain of Bakhchiserai. It is based on Pushkin's romantic poem by that title. The theme is unrequited love, of which Pushkin had had an excruciating experience in the Crimea. There he fell deeply in love with Maria Rayevskaya who, however, was unable to return it. While staying with her people in the Crimea Pushkin visited the fountain of Bakhchiserai which we visited three years later. In this ballet, too, there are two heroines—Maria, the frail, innocent girl, with whom Khan Girei fell deeply in love and of whom Pushkin's own Maria was the prototype, and Zarema, the queen of the harem who, in a fit of anger and jealousy, kills Maria. It was characteristic of Ulanova that she always danced Maria in this ballet, while Plisetskaya made a superb Zarema.

It was worth going to the Bolshoi theatre not merely to see the actors but to see the audience. Nowhere have I seen such sympathy between the actors and the audience. It was more than sympathy; it might almost be called communion. The audience responded instinctively to every word, every tune, every gesture on the stage. It was as if the spectators lay suspended on the lips of the singers, on the lovely legs and arms of the ballerinas. For four hours they forgot all their earthly worries and were transported to a different world altogether—a world, mythical or historical, a world of gods and goddesses, or a world of heroic ancestors, vibrant with vitality and full of frolic. Tomorrow they would wake up and read in *Pravda* of the wicked designs of the 'Anglo-American war-mongers' and the horrors of the war they were thirsting to let loose on the Soviet Union and the

peaceful Peoples' Democracies of Asia and Europe. But that would be tomorrow; tonight they can sleep in peace, dreaming of Romeo and Juliet, Odette and Odile, Maria and Zarema, Cinderella and the Sleeping Beauty and all those gorgeous men and women who throng the stage and sing and dance.

THE BALLET SCHOOL

The first week of January, 1953, was in many respects the best since we arrived in Moscow. It was cold, crisp and clear. The temperature dropped 15 degrees below zero, but there was not much snow. Such snow as we had was of the fine, powdery kind which could be easily swept off the streets.

The sun was often bright. Bright, but not hot or even warm. Not for one moment could we dispense with our fur coats or fur caps. Anujee accompanied me, bare-headed, to Gogol park yesterday and got a crick in the neck which I offered, but forgot, to massage with medicated oil. The sky. instead of wearing its perpetually monotonous mantle of white, turned pink in the mornings and evenings and remained blue for the rest of the day. A couple of nights ago we could even see the stars. And in the morning when I, as usual, woke up at six, while the rest of Moscow was asleep, and looked out of the window in my office, I saw a lovely moon fading behind the trees in front of our house

Politically there were no alarums The General Assembly adjourned for a hard-earned, if not well-earned, rest; and the nations of the world were spared that mutual abuse and recrimination in which representatives had been indulging in New York. There was a full in the lighting in Korea; and the heat generated by the Indian resolution on Korea in the General Assembly had subsided.

During this week I paid my first formal call on Vyshinksy. the Soviet Foreign Minister. He was friendly, but I could not help remembering that this was the man who, only a few weeks ago, spat fire against our resolution on Korea and thundered: 'At best you, Indians, are dreamers and idealists; at worst, you are instruments of horrible American policy.'

In a politically uneventful week, we had an interesting expeiience. We paid a visit to the Ballet School. We had to cliub many flights of stairs to reach the Director's office. On or way, we passed three or four young girls of ten or eleven who smiled, bowed and curtsied to us. There was something charmingly old-worldish about the way they curtsied. It was very different from the curtsy which the buxom wife of a high Indian official once attempted at a Viceregal banquet in New Delhi. On such occasions Indian women generally used to fold their hands in the normal Indian way instead of curtsying in the Western fashion. One fashionable Indian lady, however, attempted to bend her knees in curtsy with the result that she crashed to the floor; and the Viceroy's ADCs had to spend many agonizing seconds in trying to hoist her up to a vertical position.

The Director of the Ballet School explained to us the origin and purposes of the school. It was founded in 1773. It was thus 179 years old, three years older than the Bolshoi theatre, of which this school had come to be the principal feeder. Its object was to train boys and girls between the ages of ten and nineteen into ballet dancers. At present there were 200 students. Anyone who was found wanting during the nine years' course was discharged. This did not involve much hardship, as the school gave a general education, in addition to specialized training in dancing; and anyone who was discharged at any stage could continue his general education

in some other school.

We were first taken to a class of beginners. In this class the boys and girls were taught simple leg movements. They had to repeat these exercises over and over again so that their limbs might gain the necessary strength and suppleness. The teacher asked one of the girls to come forward and we were astonished at the way in which she manipulated her legs forwards and backwards, to the right and to the left, and round

and round, without causing the slightest discomfort to their owner.

We were then taken to a middle class. There we saw girls of about 14 and 15 dancing. They were in an interesting stage; they were half way through their course. They had done some four years' training; and another four or five lay before them. They had overcome the diffidence of the students of the class which we had just visited, but had not yet gained the superb self-assurance of the pupils of the class which we were to visit a few minutes later. I said that they looked like little butterflies which had learned to fly but could not yet soar into the heavens. The teacher was pleased with my remark.

Next we went to the highest class. By that time we had learned how intense was their training, how rigorous their time-table, how strict their diet and how intimate the attention paid to every detail of their lives. In particular, the school had a band of devoted teachers, mostly former ballet dancers who were now too old to dance. We then saw the finished products of this training. They entertained us to a half-hour display of dancing. It was as if we were witnessing some minor, but highly delightful, interlude in the Bolshoi theatre itself. The dancers were radiantly happy and supremely self-confident. They were in the same mood as an Oxford man who gets that rare distinction, a First, and to whom all avenues in life are open. Before them lay a path, strewn with 'roses, roses all the way' and with no political thorns. Happily, politics has not yet invaded the world of the ballet

After showing us round the classes, the Director topped his kindness by treating us to a concert. It consisted of three or four items, of which the most charming was a scene from Nuteracker. There is no politics in Nuteracker. It is sheer fantasy. Masha, a little girl, is taken to a Christmas party and gets a nuteracker as a present. But she has a quarrel with her little brother and forgets to take it home. In the night she dreams that she is a grown-up girl and goes to the

drawing-room to fetch the nuteracker. A fierce fight is in progress between the nutcracker and his toy soldiers and the King of the Mice and his valiant followers. The Nutcracker is on the point of losing the battle when Masha hurls her slippers at the Mouse King. The spell is broken, the mice disappear and the Nutcracker turns into a beautiful prince; and Masha and the prince sail away in an open boat on a silver sea. The play ends with Masha waking up and seeing the nuteracker and her dotting nurse by her side.

TOLSTOY'S HOME

Yasnaya Polyana is a pleasant spot for a picnic from Moscow. To us it was more than a picnic; it was a pilgrimage. Tolstoy's name is held in reverence throughout India, not merely because of his writings, but because he was one of the great formative influences, next only to the Gita and the Sermon on the Mount, on Mahatma Gandhi. I was glad to have been able to go to Yasnaya Polyana in the company of Gandhiji's favourite disciple, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.

Tolstoy's house is situated in a lovely undulating park some 40 hectures in extent. It is a simple unpretentious building, fully in keeping with his philosophy of life. It was small by Tsarist standards, for Folstoy came from aristocratic stock, his father having been a Count and his mother a Princess. His house is preserved exactly as it used to be in his lifetime. In his bedroom we saw pictures of his family, which consisted of thirteen children, five of whom died in infancy, his old cot, the crutch which he had to use after he had injured his leg, and the slop-basin which he himself insisted on emptying and cleaning Tolstoy, like Gandhiji, believed in the dignity of manual labour and expected the members of his family, often to their annovance, to use their hands more and their servants less. His small bedroom was a striking contrast

to his wife's. Hers was larger, more ornate and full of icons and pictures.

A balcony in front of Tolstoy's study overlooked a garden, which he himself used to tend, and a forest where he used to play as a child, hunt as a nobleman and meditate as a thinker. From that balcony he could also see the village, where he used to spend many hours, helping and chatting and cracking jokes with the villagers. On the ground floor he had set apart a room to receive the peasants; his wife could not bear to have them on the first floor. In fact, his solicitude for, and his intimacy with, the peasants was one cause of the friction which developed between him and his family in later years.

We were happy to be in Tolstoy's study where he wrote some of his famous novels such as War and Peace and Anna Karenina and corresponded with kindred spirits, including Mahatma Gandhi. There we saw the hard-bottomed sofa on which he was born, a phonograph which was presented to him by Edison, a picture of Dickens which he had brought from England and the woodwork presented to him by the peasants whom he loved. There was also his writing desk, on which was his scrap book, made up from odd bits of paper which others would have thrown into the wastepaper basket. Rajkumariji said that Gandhiji, too, could not bear to throw away any bit of paper which could be used and, like Tolstoy, kept a scrap book. The most touching sight of all was the candle on the writing desk which he blew out for the last time on the night of 10 November 1910 when he decided to renounce his home and family and go out and live a simple life. That night he wrote a letter to his wife, explaining his decision, thanking her for the life they had lived together, and apologizing to her for any lack of consideration on his part. One soul, his wife's, remained strange to this man who had plumbed the depths of the human heart in his imperishable novels.

Around Tolstoy's house is an extensive garden where he planted apple and cherry trees and grew all kinds of flowers.

He loved gardening and insisted that the members of his family should share this pleasure which, to many of them, was mere labour. In one corner of the house, Bulgakov, who had been his secretary in the last years of his life, showed us a pond where Tolstoy's wife, on learning of his flight from home, attempted to drown herself and Bulgakov had to plunge in and save her. In another part of the compound we saw his stable and a small dispensary which his favourite daughter, Tatyana, had built for the peasants after her father's death. Tatyana was the only child who fully shared her father's ideals. In 1930, when Gandhiji passed through Rome on his way back to India after the Round Table Conference in London, Tatyana was gracious enough to go and see him.

The garden around Tolstoy's home merges almost imperceptibly into the forest. There are some lovely oak trees here; and it is said that under a clump of these trees Tolstoy's wife, Sofia Alexandryevna, and her small son once sought shelter during a thunderstorm - an incident described in War and Peace. In the heart of the forest is Tolstoy's grave. It is simplicity itself. The simplest tomb I had visited so far was that of the Emperor Aurangzeb near Ellora. That puritan Emperor had given instructions that nothing more should be spent on his tomb than the price which could be fetched from the sale of the cloth caps which he himself had sewn during his lifetime. Unlike the magnificent tombs of his ancestors, Akbar and Shahjahan, Aurangzeb's tomb is marked by a single slab of marble. Tolstoy's grave is even simpler. It is just a mound of earth, covered with flowers, under a canopy of white birch trees. Tolstoy himself had marked this spot for his grave. It is said that it was here that he and his brother, Nikolai, used to play as children and hunt for a magical green stick, the possessor of which would have the capacity of making all beings happy. And now this has become a magic spot, giving comfort and inspiration to warweary humanity through that doctrine of non-violence which the man who lies here preached and which was adopted by one as great as himself and used for the liberation of one-fifth of mankind.

Standing in front of Tolstoy's grave, I thought of the strange last journey of this man. On 10 November 1910 Tolstoy, at the age of 82, suddenly decided to renounce his home and go out into the world. Accompanied by his daughter Alexandra and his doctor, he left his house in the middle of the night. The next day he reached the monastery of Optina and spent the night there, writing an article, 'The Pains of Death'. On the 12th he reached the Convent of Charmodino where his sister. Marie, had been staying as a nun. He told his sister that he would like to live in that Convent, performing the most menial tasks, provided that no pressure would be used on him to enter the church. His visit, however, could not be kept secret; and his sister warned him two days later that the authorities, civil as well as ecclesiastical, were on his track. He therefore left the Convent and went to Astopovo, a small railway station. There he caught pneumonia. The news spread like wild-fire; and doctors came from Moscow. Priests came, too; and Father Karsonoft, the Abbot of Optina, demanded admission to the dying man's presence, saving that he had been instructed by the Holy Synod to take Tolstoy back into the Church. The Synod, which had excommunicated Tolstoy a few years earlier for his uncompromising opposition to institutional religion, now wanted to capture his soul for the Church. His daughter, however, mounted guard over him and prevented any priests from approaching him. There, in the house of the humble station-master of Astopovo, Tolstoy passed away at 6 a.m. on 20 November 1910.

A few yards from his grave lies his favourite horse, which survived him by two years.

A RUSSIAN HOSPITAL

At the end of February 1958 I went into hospital with a

severe attack of influenza, hoping to come out within a week. Actually, I had to stay there for a month as my influenza developed into pneumonia. It was a peculiar kind of pneumonia: there was hardly any temperature and there were no aches and pains of any kind. Yet it lingered for many weeks and has left a scar in my right lung which, I am told,

will be a life-long companion.

I was accommodated in the Fifth Block of the Bodkin Hospital. This block, which has about 20 rooms, each with two beds, is reserved for foreigners and especially for diplomats. Among my fellow-patients were a couple of Afghans, a Chinese, a Ceylonese, an Indonesian, a Korean, a Pole, an Albanian, a Yugoslav and a Rumanian. There was no one from any Embassy belonging to NATO, CENTO or SEATO. Not that the personnel of these Embassies are more immune from human ailments or more acclimatized to Moscow than others; but whenever they fall ill, they prefer to avail themselves of the services of the doctors attached to the British and American Embassies, and if their illness is at all serious they are flown off to Berlin or Stockholm. Evidently, the Westerners' lack of faith in Russian politics also extends to Russian medicine.

It is perhaps natural that Englishmen and Americans should prefer to get treated by doctors of their own nationality. In the British days, Englishmen in India, and especially Englishwomen, generally insisted on the right to be treated by English doctors; that was one of the reasons originally urged against the Indianization of the IMS. British prestige was involved. I recall a curious incident which occurred more than 30 years ago when I entered the ICS. A senior British ICS officer's daughter had been expecting a child and desired to be attended by Dr Rangachary, a famous surgeon whose statue stands in front of the General Hospital, Madras. Her parents tried their best to dissuade her but she was adamant. The result was that her unfortunate father, who permitted a 'native' to attend on his daughter at the time of her delivery, was almost boycotted

by his people and—so it was said—lost his chance of becoming a Member of the Governor's Executive Council.

The Bodkin Hospital consists of 27 blocks and can accommodate 2200 patients. To judge by Block No. V, the hospital is liberally staffed. The staff consists mostly of women. In Block No. V, the doctors-in-charge were Galina Ilinichna Kozlova and Nina Govrilova. Dr Kozlova is a highly skilled doctor, who goes about with a perpetually worried look; I suspect she worries too much over the state of her patients. She has the kindest of eyes, so reassuring to a person who is ill. Dr Govrilova is younger and more energetic. She is one of the few thin women I have come across in Russia and has almost the figure of a ballerina. No man has ever been treated by doctors abler or more kind-hearted than these two women.

The nurses were of course all women. In the Soviet Union there are no male nurses as in India. The Bodkin nurses were all in, or just out of, their teens and appear to have been selected, or at least posted to this ward, as much for their good looks as for their efficiency. One of them was a novice. Whenever she injected penicillin into me-and, to start with, this was done four times a day-I felt that she was plugging a hole into me. The other three were more gentle. One complimented me on the state of my buttocks: she said I must have been an athlete, for the needle would not go easily into me. Another was less complimentary: she said it was always difficult to inoculate southerners like Indians and Africans, meaning that our hide was pretty thick. My own favourite was Valia who combined good looks, good nature and an affectionate disposition. A rare combination in a nurse, which might soothe or disturb a patient, according to his temperament, during his convalescence!

Each nurse was assisted by an elderly female who made the beds and kept the rooms clean. They had a passion for cleanliness. Twice a day, and sometimes more often, these hefty women, armed with vacuum cleaners, brooms and buckets, would barge into your room, no matter whether you were sleeping or not, and start cleaning. These women were old enough to be the mothers of the nurses. Evidently they are too old to be trained and are therefore employed in menial occupations which require no special training or intelligence. I felt somewhat sorry for them as it was their duty to clean the latrines and WCs. These had to be cleaned very often as the flush was always leaking. When we were in hospital in August last, we found the flush leaking; it was leaking still! The flush in our Embassy, too, was always going out of order. I used to think it strange that a State which was the first to invent the sputnik should not have devised a satisfactory flush. This reflected the disparity between heavy industry and consumer goods—a disparity which is becoming less and less with every passing year.

While the doctors were all women, the professors were all men. Between a doctor and a professor there is the same difference as between a Tutor and a Fellow at Oxford. A number of professors examined me—Levin, Reinburg. Shereshevsky, Savitsky and Vachell. Each of them was an authority in his own field and would have been an ornament to the medical profession in any country in the world.

I also had the honour of being examined by an Academician. In the USSR, an Academician is regarded with the highest respect; he stands far higher than even a Professor; his standing can only be compared to that of a Fellow of All Souls. Academician Vovci was the Chairman of a Board which was constituted to deal with my case. The name, Vovci, roused a sinister echo in my mind. He was one of those Jewish 'doctor-murderers' who, in January 1953, or charged by Stalin for having medically mardered senior members of the Party, the Government and the Army. Vovcion and his co-accused would assuredly have been shot if Staling had not died. It is strange that one man's life should have a been dependent on another man's death. But Vovci has saved as many lives as Stalin has destroyed.

A number of specialists were also salied in to examine

me-specialists in dermatology, diseases of the kidney, of the ear, nose and throat, and a physical instructor. The physical instructor, a magnificent woman, was a picture of physical culture. She taught me the art of deep breathing. When she breathed in, her breasts would rise challengingly towards you, but when she breathed out, they would withdraw like an army in retreat. The kidney expert inserted his giant finger into a delicate part where, in spite of my sojourn in the North-West Frontier Province, no foreign body had ever penetrated. The Ear, Nose and Throat physician was a humorist; he came in jauntily saying: 'Ear, Nose, Throat! Ear, Nose, Throat! I can repair them all.' He was disappointed to find that mine did not need repair. only grumpy individual whom I met was the tongue expert. I had somehow bitten my tongue and this formed a boil. The expert came in, had a look at the boil, asked me whether it was paining, said, 'Wash with soda,' and walked out without so much as a 'Do svidaniva' (Good-bye). Perhaps he was irritated that he, an eminent specialist, should have been called in for such a minor ailment. Or perhaps he was contemptuous that a grown-up man should have bitten his tongue!

Looking back on the weeks I spent in the hospital. I feel that after all my stay was not too tiresome. In some ways, I may even be said to have enjoyed it. It was a refreshing change to be in Moscow with no engagement book, no telephone calls, hardly any visitors, and no receptions and banquets. How many National Day receptions I escaped! Among them were the National Days of Denmark, Iceland, Pakistan, Greece, Cambodia and Hungary. Anujee dutifully attended them all. And almost every day she would come to the hospital with some gossip about the Embassy, some courier who got entangled with a Polish girl in Warsaw, some news from the outer world, some letter from the children, and always with a jar of freshly made chicken soup to supplement the wholesome but monotonous diet in the hospital.

To be in hospital is rather like being in a ship. In fact, Block No. V resembled a ship. It consisted of a long line of rooms with an open space behind and a veranda in front. The veranda opened out into three rooms, corresponding to the bar, the smoking room and the bridge room in a ship. In these rooms, patients, most of whom seemed convalescing rather than ailing, would gather together and spend their time talking to each other, reading, or watching the television. As in a ship, each had his favourite chair; and if anyone else usurped it, he felt irritated. I was generally left undisturbed in my own corner facing the garden.

The patients formed a motley crowd. There was young Habib, an Afghan boy of 12, a veritable Adonis. There was an elder Afghan of 21 who had undergone operation after operation, of which he loved giving the most vivid details: his latest operation lasted four hours and fifty minutes. There was an Albanian who would ask me the most minute questions about my illness, not so much because he was concerned over my health but because he wanted to know how far my symptoms tallied with his own. There was Pillai, my Private Secretary, who, with touching loyalty, synchronized his illness with mine so as to be with me even in hospital. There was a Chinese woman, who moved about with an air of bravado and yet was a coward: she was taken to, and brought back from, the operation ward four times, because of the hell she raised by her weeping and shrieking. And above all, there was Hashim, the Sudanese Secretary, well-read and insatiable in his thirst for knowledge, who would suddenly appear before me and ask me what I thought of life after death and democracy and materialism and mysticism. 'Don't you think', he asked me once, 'that in this country materialism is a form of mysticism?' A hospital, like a ship, forges a bond between persons which is more lasting than the casual friendships formed in a hotel or a club.

While in hospital, I heard of the result of the elections to the Supreme Soviet and Khrushchev's appointment as Prime Minister. On the latter event, which provoked headlines and leading articles in all the newspapers in the West, there was little comment in Moscow. But the Soviet organs of publicity spoke day after day regarding the tremendous significance of the elections which took place on 16 March. It was announced that 99.97 per cent had taken part in the elections and that 99.6 per cent had voted for the official candidates. Why anyone should have taken the trouble to go to the polling booth at all when there was only one candidate to vote for is something beyond my comprehension. He must have felt that he was doing his duty as a Soviet citizen; and in this country Duty is, to parody Wordsworth. 'the stern daughter of the voice of the Party'. One day, one of the old women in the hospital, after sweeping my room, said that she was going off to the polling booth to vote. 'For whom?' I asked. She did not know; it was rather a difficult name, she said. For that matter, Mr Gluck, the American Ambassador designate to Ceylon, did not know the name of Ceylon's Prime Minister!

During my illness my most constant companion was the miniature radio which hung just above my pillow. The Moscow radio does indeed provide a nourishing diet to its listeners. A physical instructor wakes you up at 6.30 a.m. to the accompaniment of music and directs you to take different kinds of exercises. Having braced you up physically, it offers you a stiff intellectual treat, the leading article in Pravda. Almost every hour, news is broadcast news, carefully sterilized so as to confirm your faith in the beauty of communism and the iniquity of capitalism. There is a children's hour both in the morning and in the afternoon. Not only are children listeners but they are performers over the radio. There is, of course, exquisite music, light and heavy, popular and classical, eastern and western, vocal and instrumental. Every now and then, there is a lesson in science and literature; and there are frequent exhortation, as to how one should behave in society. One day, I heard a dialogue as to the proper use of the right hand in polite society. When you meet someone, said the radio, you should raise your hat with the right hand, not with the left. It is only with the right hand that you should shake hands: invalids alone, whose right arm is out of order, may use the left. If the right hand is wet or dirty, do not shake hands at all; simply say. 'Sorry, my hand is dirty'. In shaking hands, too much pressure should not be applied; in fact, pressure should be regulated according to the person you shake hands with. And always, in shaking hands, look into your companion's eyes. Thus the Moscow radio strives hard to make a Soviet citizen a better man and a stauncher communist. Whether it actually does so or whether its paternalist propaganda drives a man to join the ranks of Nibonichos—a term coined to denote those who care for neither God nor Devil

(ni bog ni chort)—is a debatable question.

The strangest character I met in the hospital was a barber, who shaved me when I was too ill to move from my bed. This was one of the few occasions on which I have allowed myself to be shaved and the first occasion when I was shaved by a woman. She burst into my room like a battleship asking, 'Shave or hair-cut?' 'Shave,' I said. The nurse asked her whether she wanted any hot water. 'No,' she replied firmly. A towel perhaps, asked the nurse. 'No, no,' she replied. After this double 'No', the nurse retreated, leaving me to the barber's tender mercies. She sharpened the razor, even as Shylock sharpened his knife in the court-room in Venice, and started operations. 'Have you a wife?' she suddenly asked me. 'Yes,' I replied. 'Does she come and see you in the hospital? she asked. 'Yes, every afternoon,' I replied. 'Don't tell her that I have been here!' she said with a sardonic grin. To return the compliment, I asked her whether she had a husband. 'Yes,' she said. 'No! Yes! No! I had one. He left me. He was a lorry driver. He preferred his lorries to me.' And as if to spite him, she started pushing the razor furiously, criss-cross, up and down, right and left. For one moment, I thought the razor would justify its name. cut-throat. But to give her her due. I must say I had the cleanest of shaves. Her method reminded me of Anatole France's story of a girl who exercised her profession, the oldest in the world, on him. At first she was supine and listless, but when she came to know that she had a member of the French Academy in her hands, she mustered all her resources and set about her business so vigorously that Anatole France had to tell her: 'A little less force, my dear, and a little more finesse will be welcome.'

MOSCOW REVISITED

My last visit to Moscow was in September 1966, five years after I retired from service. To say that I found Moscow changed would be an understatement. A foreign journalist who had been in Moscow in the early thirties and came to Moscow during my stay there told me that the only things he could recognize as belonging to old Moscow were the Kremlin and the Moscow river. An even greater change has occurred during the last decade.

I flew from Delhi on a fine autumn morning in a Soviet plane, TU-114. It is named after its famous designer, Andrei Tupolev. Among other planes designed by him, are TU-104, TU-124 and TU-154. We met Tupolev at a lovely sanatorium in the Crimea. Nidznia Orianda, where he spent a holiday in 1960 at the same time as ourselves. Though in his sixties, he was always on his feet, but even when he was on his feet, his head seemed to be in the air, weaving designs for new and ever-newer aeroplanes.

I entered the plane preening myself that I was a veteran traveller to Moscow. Who else, among the 186 passengers on the plane, could have been to Moscow nine times, six times when I was Ambassador and thrice since? But I was promptly put in my place by Hardev Sandhu, a prominent businessman of Delhi, who told me that he had been to Moscow twenty-five times and lost count thereafter.

There also travelled on our plane, Kalelkar, a member of

Parliament, and his wife, a doctor; Narayanan, the editor of *Patriot*, and forty Indian students going to study in Moscow. The presence, on a single flight, of students, doctors, journalists, members of Parliament, and a former diplomat showed the multi-dimensional character of Indo-Soviet relations.

The students in the plane were proceeding to the Lumumba University, established specially for students from underdeveloped countries. I recall an incident connected with this university. Originally the intention was to call it simply the Friendship University, but when the wanton murder of Lumumba took place it was called after his name. At that time some students were against it; they thought that Lumumba was too controversial a figure to be associated with an academy of learning. Most students, however, agreed with the authorities that Lumumba was at once a symbol and a portent of our times—a symbol of revolution and a portent of the extent to which counter-revolutionaries were

prepared to go to thwart the revolutionary process.

My latest journey to Moscow was very different from our earlier journeys in the Soviet Union. Then there were no safety belts and no air hostesses, and one had to carry one's food and drink. Now the amenities provided by Acroflot were comparable to those in our own splendid air service, Air India. The food was excellent: we had a typical Russian breakfast consisting of cabbage, cheese, black rye bread, a dish of meat and that dry Georgian wine, as delicious as its name, Tsinandali, or if you preferred, champagne, cognac or vodka. The hostesses were efficient, well-dressed and business-like. They did not fancy themselves as houris at the service of flying Maharajas nor did they wear that prefabricated smile which the hostesses of some airlines are taught to affect. Indeed, they looked almost grim, but when something amused them, they broke into a beautiful smile. I have noticed again and again how a normally impassive Russian countenance becomes transfused and takes on an unusual glow when it reacts spontaneously to some sound. sight or word. It is like sunlight bursting through the clouds.

My first impression of Moscow, while driving from Sheremetive airport to the city, was how much it had grown since we were here last, in 1964, and how much it had been transformed since my first visit, in 1952. But unlike cities in some other parts of the world, it has not grown pell-mell. Earlier in this century, H. G. Wells, the centenary of whose birthday was celebrated during my stay in Moscow, wrote of the increasing 'suburbanization of the whole of South-East England where old townships were torn to fragments and new and ugly townships sprang up'. 'And amidst it all,' he deplored, 'no plan appears, no intention, no comprehensive desire. That is the very key to it all.' On the contrary, the very key to the growth of Moscow and its environment is that there is a plan, an intention and a comprehensive desire. Doubtless, the plan and the intention have changed from time to time. For instance, the buildings favoured at present lack the grandiose splendour which characterized the skyscrapers put up in Stalin's time. But, as Khrushchev put it, 'the architect wants lines, but the workman wants space'. So innumerable apartments are being put up which lack outward grandeur but possess interior comforts.

We stayed at the Sovietskaya hotel, which has grown out of the old Yar restaurant, to which there are frequent references in the novels of Tolstoy and others. Many new hotels have sprung up, such as the Minsk, Ukraina, and Leningradskaya. And a 22-story hotel, called Rossiya, was being built overlooking the Moscow river, near the historic Kremlin and St Basil's, with 3200 suites, 90 lifts, two cinemas, a concert hall and a garage for 500 cars

One thing had not changed in Moscow, namely our own Fmbassy. Of my forty years' service, nearly one-fourth was spent there, and nowhere had we been happier or felt more that our exertions were rewarding. Now we telt as if we had not left that house at all; everything seemed just the same. The same carpets, the same curtains, and much the same arrangement of chairs and tables. When we went into the bathroom, Anuice noticed that it had the same window

curtain as the one which she had made out of an old saree of hers 8 years ago. Even the three hooks in the dining room, on which had hung Anujee's splendid portrait by Nalbandian, were still there. Lapin. Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of India and South Asia, told me that that picture was well known in the USSR and that he had seen some reproductions of it. I remember with what energy Nalbandian used to paint that portrait. He would paint for a quarter of an hour, then gulp down a glass of Armenian cognac and give a cup of strong, black coffee to Anujee, and then resume his work like a man possessed. His portrait of Anujee is magnificent, almost lifesize; but 'Why', asked Mrs Sohlman, wife of the doyen of our diplomatic corps, 'have you made Mrs Menon look so serious?' 'Because', said Nalbandian, 'I wanted her to be a specimen of progressive Indian womanhood.'

On the morning after our arrival I looked out of the balcony of our house. It has always commanded a most extensive view but the view had somewhat changed. On all sides, multistoried buildings were being put up. My only regret is that they obscured the view of two or three churches on the horizon. Formerly we could pick out seven churches against the sky, with the onion domes characteristic of Slav architecture. Now only four were visible. Man is making rapid progress in the USSR and God is retiring gracefully

into the background.

In the evening we visited the University area. We went in our new Zil car, even more imposing than a Cadillac. Andrei, our chauffeur, said that the Chinese Embassy also had a Zil, but they did not use it much. In fact, nowadays, the Chinese were not to be seen much in Moscow. 'In the past,' said Andrei, raising his hands above his head, 'the Chinese used to be up there, but now,' he added, pointing to the ground, 'the Chinese are down there. They just write, write and write. We gave them every help to put up their plants and factories; and look at the way they are treating us now.'

When I first came to Moscow, the University was being

built, and there was nothing beyond but fields and forests. Now, apartment houses had come up by the hundred almost

all the way to the airport, 35 kilometres away.

In front of the University we stood on Sparrow Hill, now called Lenin Hill, where Napoleon stood on his entry into Moscow and, seeing the great city stretched out at his feet, exclaimed: 'All this is mine.' Below the hill the river Moscow takes a turn to the right and flows past Novodevichi, a monastery-cum-nunnery during the Middle Ages, from which the inmates leapt in the thirteenth century to fight the advancing Tartars. On the bank of the river has sprung up Lenin Stadium with accommodation for 100,000 persons. All over the city, old buildings are being demolished, factories are being removed to the suburbs, and new shops, restaurants and dwelling houses are rising.

I noticed many more cars in Moscow than during my previous visits. Yet there was no traffic iam as there is in other capitals of the world, notably London. This again is due to long-term planning, for the roads built in the fifties were planned not for the sixties, but for the nineties of the century. It is also due to the policy of discouraging the indiscriminate purchase of private cars. When we were in Moscow, the problem of traffic congestion in the world was being discussed at a conference in London, attended by 85 delegations consisting of 3000 delegates from different parts of the world. Mrs Barbara Castle, the Minister of Transport, called the motor-vehicle 'a mixed blessing, not only because of the toll of accidents but because of its effect on the quality of urban life' 'Let there be no mistake,' she said, 'the motor-vehicle, unchecked, can destroy good environment. nearly as effectively as it can benefit communities . We must not let it damage irretrievably the quality of our living How it has affected the quality of living is shown in the USA where the entire was of life, with drive-in restaurants, drivein cinemas, etc., is hitched on to the automobile, so much so that a scientist prophesied that a day may come when men will have no legs, or will have but diminutive legs, as a result

of their disuse. In the Soviet Union, at any rate, there is no such danger, because the authorities realize the evils of unrestricted motor-traffic.

The authorities also realize the evils of the exodus from the countryside into the cities and particularly into the capital. They have, therefore, declared that no one shall live permanently in Moscow without permission, and the permission is withheld unless the man has some business there. One cannot help wishing for some such regulation in Delhi and New Delhi, which have been growing too fast for the civic amenities to be maintained at a proper level. Doubtless, this would mean interference with individual liberty, but the path of wisdom lies in reconciling the liberty of the individual with the interests of the community.

2 UZBEKISTAN AND GEORGIA

TASHKENT

Our first tour of the Soviet Union was in the company of Indira Gandhi, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru. She came on a private visit and stayed with us as our personal guest in Moscow, but outside Moscow, the Soviet Government insisted on treating her as a state guest, and full VIP treatment was accorded to her. Among the places which we visited in her company were Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, Sochi, a sanatorium on the Black Sea, and Leningrad, formerly St Petersburg, the capital of Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It took us nearly 12 hours to fly from Moscow to Tashkent, with an hour's halt at Aktiubinsk, a small green patch in the heart of the desert in Kazakhstan. When I visited Tashkent again four years later, the journey took but four hours in a jet plane. The Soviet Union was the first country in the world to use jet planes extensively for commercial travel. This has made a great difference. Even Delhi has been brought within six hours' flying distance of Moscow, and a bi-weekly service was inaugurated on our Independence Day, 15 August 1958. When I arrived in Moscow in 1952, not a single foreign airline was allowed to fly in. Within five years, a number of foreign airlines such as the SAS. Air France, KLM, Sabena, Finnair, BEA and Air India had begun to fly to Moscow and vice versa. At a dinner which we gave in honour of the inauguration of the direct air service between Delhi and Moscow, Marshal Zhoverenko, the Head of Aeroflot, compared the sudden expansion of the Soviet Airlines to the way in which champagne rushed out of a bottle which Gopalan, our butler, had just uncorked.

Our first thought in Tashkent was how similar it was to some of our North Indian cities. It was the height of summer and there were the same discomforts, dust and flies; and there was the same mass of loosely-clad, listless humanity, strolling hither and thither to get a breath of fresh air.

For centuries water used to be an acute problem in Tashkent and, indeed, in all Central Asia. In these regions water is known as 'the elixir of life'. There is a local proverb: 'Where there is water, there is a garden; where there is no water, there is a graveyard.' In Tashkent we saw an opera, Farhad and Shirin, of which the theme was the immemorial quest for water in Central Asia. The story can be briefly told. Farhad falls deeply in love with a beautiful girl, Shirin, who returns his love. But she cannot bring herself to marry him and be happy so long as the people around her are suffering and the fields remain untilled for want of water. Farhad therefore tries desperately to dam the Syr Darya river and divert its waters to the hungry steppe; and he perishes heroically in this attempt.

If Farhad were to be reborn, he would feel happy at the sight of Tashkent, where the problem of water has been solved under Soviet rule. Tashkent is now essentially a garden city, full of parks, flower gardens and artificial lakes. Irrigation in Central Asia was one of the first problems to which the Soviet Government paid attention. A number of canals have been built and more are projected. The reserves of Syr Darya, the largest river in Central Asia, which flows from Turkistan and Uzbekistan, are being fully utilized. This has enabled various crops such as wheat, barley, rice, maize, sugarcane, and sweet potatoes, and various kinds of fruit to be grown. Uzbekistan is noted for its fruit, which includes 86 varieties of pomegranates, 50 varieties of figs and 73 varieties of grapes.

The principal crop is cotton. When we visited Tashkent for the second time, the harvest of cotton was in full swing. This is the most festive part of the year in Uzbekistan, for

its prosperity depends mostly on cotton. Not only farmers but almost the entire population took part—and pride—in the harvesting operations. On the day of our arrival, there was to have been a football match between Tashkent and Samarkand. When we got to the football field we were told that the Samarkand team could not come because they had gone off to pick cotton. Tamara Khanum, the famous Uzbek dancer, told us in Moscow that she was going to Tashkent to take part in the harvest festival. The Tashkent University was almost empty because the students had been directed to pick cotton.

At Tashkent our party was hospitably looked after by the local authorities, including Zulfia, the poetess. They had framed a most strenuous programme for us, which Indira Gandhi, frail as she was, bravely fulfilled. Among the institutions which we visited in Tashkent were the Museum of Uzbek Culture and Art, the Medical Institute, the Conservatory of Music, the Palace of Pioneers, a collective farm, the Museum of Manuscripts and the Stalin textile combine.

The Revolution has brought great benefits to this region. Of these none is more remarkable than education. The Director of Education told us that before the Revolution only 1.5 per cent of the people were literate. Now illiteracy has been almost wiped out. In addition to ordinary schools, there were polytechnical schools, a medical college and 11 music schools. We visited the Conservatory where the boys and girls treated us to a delightful concert of music, old and new, Uzbek and Russian, vocal and instrumental. They even gave us an orchestral rendering of a Bengali tune which they had learnt from Sheela Dayal, the wife of a former Counsellor of the Indian Embassy in Moscow.

It is interesting to compare the state of education as it was in British India with what it was in Tsarist, and is in Soviet, Russia. Though the percentage of literacy in British India was low enough in all conscience. British India was once held up as a model for Russia to follow in Central

Asia. Arminius Vambery, a famous Hungarian traveller, who visited Central Asia in 1866, wrote:

In India, there are 85,000 institutions, including schools and colleges of all sorts, and the number of students amounts to nearly two million, out of which 72,000 are girls at schools maintained for them specially.

This number of school-attending children is certainly not very large, for it shows only nine scholars to a thousand of the population; but where do we find, in the Mohammedan world, a similar average percentage, and what is the number of Bashkir, Kazak, Tartar and Tschuvashian students, supported by Russia, when compared with the above percentage?

Thus, in 1866, Uzbekistan lagged behind British India. But by 1947, the position had changed. At the end of British rule in India, 87 per cent of the people of India were still illiterate, whereas illiteracy has, under Soviet rule, been practically eliminated. There cannot be a more eloquent commentary on the benefits which the Revolution of 1917 has brought to the people of Central Asia.

SAMARKAND

From Tashkent we flew to Samarkand. There are few cities in the world which have such a halo of romance as Samarkand. It was here that the Thousand and One Tales of the Arabian Nights were related by Scheherazade to Sultan Shariyar. Unfortunately this city attracted the bealeful attention of three of the mightiest conquerors the world has seen: Alexander the Great, Genghiz Khan and Timur. Genghiz Khan did a thorough job: he took Samarkand in A.D. 1221 and left his soldiers to loot it for three days and nights. Timur, too, was a fierce tornado, which swept over northern India for a few weeks and then swept back again to Central Asia, leaving ruin and desolation behind. Nothing could be more terribly laconic than the entry which Timur made in his diary regarding the conquest of India. 'I then turned my

attention to Hindustan. My generals told me that conquest would be difficult, but I thought that it would be easy. Did so.' Did so! These two words signified massacre, pestilence and famine.

Timur, however, was a man of taste. On his return to Samarkand from India, Timur built a magnificent mosque in commemoration of his victory. We spent an hour in its half-ruined precincts and conjured up the vision of what it must have been in Timur's time. With a main hall, 83 by 62 metres, supported by 400 pillars, a gateway 36.5 metres high, on which were engraved geometrical figures and quotations from the Koran, and a noble dome, predominantly blue but with touches of green and yellow, this must have been one of the tallest and most imposing monuments in the East. Unfortunately, it has been damaged by repeated earthquakes and is now beyond the power of even Soviet architects to repair.

Timur was not only a man of taste but, according to his lights, of faith. One of the most interesting buildings constructed by him was the Shah-i-Zinda, or the Living King, built in honour of a Muslim saint. Kussan Ibn-i-Abbas, who lived in the seventh century and was a cousin of the Prophet Mohammad. He was murdered by his enemies, but Timur recognized his holiness and built for him a tomb covered with Koranic quotations. In its neighbourhood, Timur buried his own relatives, including two of his wives, for whom he built two mausoleums. Here I mur also built a mosque which came to be considered almost as sacred as Mecca itself. And all around there is a vast graveyard where pious Muslims think it an honour to be buried.

Timur's own tomb is one of the finest architectural monuments in Central Asia. It was begun by him for his favourite grandson, Mohammad Sultan. In 1403, when Timur was conducting a campaign in Iranscaucasia, he summoned his grandson. He died on reaching Iranscaucasia and Iimur, stricken with grief, returned to the capital in 1404 and began the construction of a tomb for his grandson. The next year

Timur himself died, and the monument which was intended for his grandson now contains also the relics of Timur, of his spiritual preceptor, and of his famous grandson, Uluq

Beg.

Uluq Beg was the greatest ruler of his dynasty. Like our own Akbar, he was one of those rulers who were born ahead of their time. His entire life was spent in thwarting the forces of reaction, both in the civil and in the ecclesiastical sphere. He was not merely a great ruler, but a great scholar, scientist, mathematician and astronomer. By far the most interesting object which we saw in Samarkand was an observatory constructed by Uluq Beg in the first part of the fifteenth century. This observatory, like its builder, has had a strange fate. In 1449 Uluq Beg was murdered by his own son, who became the focus of obscurantist elements in the country. They did not spare even his observatory. It was destroyed so thoroughly that for 450 years even the fact that such an observatory had existed was forgotten. It was discovered by chance by a Russian archaeologist, Viatkin, in 1909, and the clues to its construction and the calculations on which they were based were found in a book written by Jai Singh, Maharaja of Jaipur who, in the seventeenth century, built a fine observatory, Jantar Mantar, which still exists in a perfect state of preservation in Delhi. How accurate Uluq Beg's calculations were may be seen from the fact that he reckoned a solar year to be 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes and 10 seconds. Thus Uluq Beg's calculations fell short of the mark by less than a minute.

It is indeed sad that so great a scholar and ruler as Uluq Beg should have been killed by a fanatic. We Indians cannot afford to throw stones at the Uzbeks for this crime, for the greatest man whom India had produced since Buddha met the same fate in 1948. How tight Bernard Shaw was when he exclaimed, on the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

"How dangerous it is to be good "

TBILISI

Of all the states in the Soviet Union the one which Indira was most anxious to see was Georgia, because she had heard that Georgian men were the handsomest in the world. And I decided to accompany her because Georgian women were the most beautiful. Overhearing our talk, Anujee thought that it was not safe to leave us both at large in Georgia and decided to come with us.

The Georgians did not disappoint us. We found them strikingly handsome. We have not set eyes on a goodlier set of people than the Georgians who entertained us to dinner in Tbilisi. Among them were distinguished poets, professors, historians, musicians and film stars. It was as if Georgian scholarship, art, poetry, music and dancing had taken personable human forms to come and entertain us.

The dinner began at 9 and went on till the small hours of the morning. It started somewhat stiffly as among the twenty-five of us only one Indian could speak Russian and three Russians could speak English. But when we sat down to dinner and wine started flowing the atmosphere became cordial. Then there was no need for language. Only there were long pauses between the courses. After the previous course, the shashlik took a whole hour to come, but it was worth waiting for.

At the Georgian dinner we did not feel the passage of time, because the intervals between the courses were enlivened by songs and dances from some of the most eminent artistes in Georgia. The high-water mark of the evening was reached when our hosts presented Anujee and Indira with lovely Georgian dresses. They retired, together with their hostesses, into the dressing room and reappeared in their Georgian costumes, to the enthusiastic applause of the audience.

At about 1 30 a.m. we took leave of our hosts and went

home. We had to be up at 4.30 so as to catch the plane at dawn. We could still have had three hours' sleep, but we had some packing to do. And then we went to our balcony to have one last, long, lingering look at Tbilisi by night. On both sides of the Kura river lay the city, lit with myriads of lights. Tbilisi looked like a bride decked in all her jewels, ready to receive the bridegroom. During our first night in Tbilisi, too, I could not take my eyes away from her and remained on the balcony until after midnight. But when I woke in the morning and looked out the city was covered by a haze: the lights had gone, the glory had departed, and Tbilisi looked like.

Some banquet-hall deserted, Whose lights are fled, Whose garlands dead, And all but he departed!

Or, to revert to the bridal metaphor, it looked like a widowed

city; and the Kura looked like a stream of tears.

The next day I discovered that it was not I alone who was so deeply affected by this sight. On the balcony next to ours was Indira. She told me that, intoxicated by the view of Tbilisi at night, she could not sleep but stayed awake till three in the morning. 'I do not get drunk on wine,' she said; 'I get drunk on other things.'

Tbilisi is a picturesque town, sprawling on both banks of the Kura, a mountain torrent which has its source in Turkey and runs to the Caspian Sea. It is surrounded by hills, the spurs of the Caucasus. Most of the hills are bare, but a systematic attempt was being made to plant trees even on the rocky, inhospitable hillsides. Tbilisi could already boast of 35 parks. We were shown round a new one, called Veke Park, which was being laid out. It begins as a formal garden in a valley, then crawls up the side of a hill, turns itself into a park and finally descends into a lake on the other side of the hill. On one side of this park a huge stadium, capable of accommodating 150,000 persons, was under construction

Construction—and reconstruction—was the order of the day in Tbilisi. The old capital was putting on a new garb. Tbilisi has been the capital of Georgia for 1500 years. It was destroyed fifty times, for it lay, like a luscious plum, in the way of every invader from the East as well as the West. One saw, as in the old North-West Frontier Province, ruins of forts and towers on hill-tops, from which men used to look out perpetually for the approach of enemies.

In the days of the Tsars Tbilisi was an ordinary provincial capital, with a population of 200,000. It was a town of petty clerks and petty traders. Now it was a flourishing city of half a million. We were shown round the museum, art galleries, theatres, opera house and the Palace of Pioneers. The children gave a delightful variety entertainment in Indira's honour. The change from the Tsarist to Soviet times is shown by the fact that the magnificent building which used, in the time of the Tsars, to be the Viceroy's house was now occupied by the Palace of Pioneers.

Here, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, children received special attention. One interesting object which we saw was a children's railway. This railway, 1½ kilometres long, was built in 1935 by children under the supervision of engineers. It had two trains and three stations called Pioneer Station, Joy Station and Sun Station. The entire railway was operated by children; and it was charming to see the solemn dignity of these young folk, working as station superintendents, stationmasters, pointsmen, engine-drivers and guards. This project must be contributing not merely to the amusement of the children but to their polytechnical education.

On 12 July 1953, we drove out to Gori, the birth-place of Stalin, some 90 kilometres from Tbilisi. For the first 50 kilometres we traversed the great Georgian highway, which for decades had been the only connecting link between Georgia and Russia. Our road wound between hills, now rising well above the level of the Kura, now scraping it; and the river itself sometimes contracted into a deep and narrow stream and sometimes spread over the sands, like a shallow man

telling silly stories. The mountain air was bracing; it was good to get it into our lungs after breathing, for days, the hot and dust-laden air of Central Asia.

At about the 50th Kilometre we left the main highway and took a turn to Gori. We went straight to the house in which Stalin was born in 1879 and spent the first four years of his life; thereafter his parents moved to another house in Gori. This house has two rooms, one of which was occupied by the owner and the other was hired by Djugashvili, Stalin's father. In this room, 12 x 10 ft, Stalin's parents cooked, ate and slept; and it was there that he was born. In 1937, when it was decided to preserve it as a national monument, Stalin's mother was requested to furnish the room exactly as it used to be when Stalin was born. The only furniture it had, and has, is a hard bedstead, a square table and four stools, a samovar, a kerosene oil lamp and a wooden box in which

the Diugashvilis put all their earthly belongings.

Half-an-hour's drive from Tbilisi takes one to Mtskheta. which used to be the capital of Georgia before the fifth century. There we visited the Cathedral which was of absorbing interest. It was built in the eleventh century on a spot where an earlier Christian church had stood. According to tradition, there was buried in that church an urn containing the robe which Christ was wearing at the time of his crucifixion and for which the Roman soldiers cast lots. This robe is now in the Cathedral and is exhibited to the public from time to time. The Cathedral itself, of which the architecture seemed to be more Norman than Russian or even Georgian, was damaged, destroyed and reconstructed many times in the course of eight centuries. Georgia had attracted the unwelcome attention of the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, Turks and Slavs. The bullet-shots on the walls of the Cathedral and the marks left by the hooves of angry horses on the marble slabs of the graves inside the church were an eloquent commentary on the turbulent history of Georgia. We noticed that one of the tombs bore an Arabic, as well as a Georgian, inscription. The bishop, a kindly old man who showed us round, told us that it was the tomb of an Indian Queen, a Georgian woman who had been marited to an Emperor of India in the sixteenth century, presumably Akbar, and who came home to die. The mention of another incident also reminded me of India. High up on the walls of the church we saw the carving of a hand, severed at the elbow. We were told that it was the hand of the architect of the Cathedral; the King of Georgia ordered it to be cut off lest he should build another church of this kind. This reminded me of a similar fate which, for a similar reason, overtook the architect of the peerless Taj Mahal at the command of the Emperor Shahjahan. Only in that case it was not the hand that was cut off, but the eyes that were put out.

SOCHI

After the hot and strenuous days in Central Asia, we spent three restful days in Sochi, the finest health resort on the Black Sea. I was to visit Sochi again under medical advice during the three succeeding years for one month each year.

In 1944, when I was riding on the Pamir Plateau, 12,000 feet high, I suddenly had an excruciating pain in my back, something in my spine seemed to have snapped and I was confined to bed for many days. During the succeeding years, this pain used to recar with increasing frequency and severity, laying me low for a fortnight every time. My trouble was diagnosed as a slipping disc in the vertebra and I underwent treatment in Delhi and Bombay, in London where I spent a month in the Hammersmith hospital, at the Hamie where the doctors put me on a flat bed for 30 days and finally recommended an operation, and in Budapest where the pain came when Stalin was dying, preventing me even from after time his funeral. Nothing seemed to do any good in fact the

SOCHI 215

pain got worse and was becoming chronic; my whole body was getting bent; one leg became shorter than the other and the length of my trousers had to be adjusted accordingly. It was at this stage that I put myself in the hands of the Russian doctors.

A group of Russian specialists examined me thoroughly and unanimously recommended that I should spend a month in a sanatorium in Sochi on the Black Sea. There the treatment consisted mostly of sulphur baths, carefully regulated—for, otherwise, they can be fatal—from the sulphur springs which had been known for their medical properties from Roman times, but had not been exploited properly until after the Revolution. At the end of a month's treatment, I was a different man; my pain had gone, my body became straight and the trousers had to be re-adjusted. The doctors warned me that for the effects of the treatment to be permanent I would have to undergo it in three successive years. This I did; and the back pain from which I suffered agonies from 1944 to 1953 has not occurred again.

I underwent my first course of treatment in Sochi in 1953. Then there were 56 sanatoria there. By 1960 their number had gone up to 70. Every inmate of this resort received individual attention. The meanest coal-miner who came to Sochi for rest and recuperation received as much attention as the members of the Supreme Soviet. Indeed, the coal-miners had one of the grandest sanatoria in Sochi. We ourselves stayed in the Isurupi sanatorium. In some respects we were pampered as foreigners, and specially perhaps as Indians. We had a dacha to ourselves while the others were housed together in a couple of two-storied buildings. We had a luxurious car at our disposal which we were at liberty to take wherever we liked; others had to be content with buses which left the sanatorium at fixed intervals. The food was excellent: breakfast, for instance, consisted of porridge, cold ham, caviare, eggs, a meat dish, fresh vegetables like tomato and cucumber, apple tart, cheese and coffee. To us even wines were served. Wines, but no liquors, for whisky and vodka were forbidden. Light Georgian wines were recommended and supplied; and some were so delicious that even Anujee had a sip occasionally. Muscat, which to me was

nauseatingly sweet, was her favourite.

The comforts available in the sanatoria in Sochi, however, formed a glaring contrast to the privations suffered by the ordinary citizens at that time. Bread was cheap and plentiful but hardly anything else. There were long queues in front of the milk shops and fruit shops, and fruit disappeared within a few minutes of its appearance on the stall. Medicines were good and cheap, but wrapped in paper packages of which an Indian village astrologer-physician would be ashamed. A thermometer had to be placed under the armpit for ten minutes before it registered your temperature. The nurses were astonished to see that I had with me a thermometer which worked in thirty seconds. Our thermos flask got broken and we searched the whole town in vain to replace it. All this reflected the acute scarcity of consumer goods. Under the new government vigorous efforts began to be made to improve the situation and a spate of decrees was issued for improving the quality and quantity of consumer goods.

Life in the sanatorium is strenuous, and one has to work for one's health. Here's a normal day's programme. I am up at 6, have coffee at 6.45 and must be ready every other day by 7.30 to go to Matsesta, ten kilometres away, for a sulphur bath. Two million baths are given there every year. At 9 I am back in the sanatorium, recking of sulphur, and have an enormous breakfast. On the days on which I have a bath I am compelled to stay in bed for three hours to recover from its effects. At 1.00 I have a massage; at 1.30 I go for physical culture; and at 2.00 I have my electric treatment. Lunch is at 2.45; and then, if the day is fine, we go to the seashore and lie about there till sunset. Before dinner, and indeed, at any time when one is free, one can play chess, billiards, ping-pong, volley-ball or tennis. And after dinner there is always a film show, a concert or dancing.

SOCHI 217

The doctor who was in immediate charge of me was a bright, bouncing woman, black-haired and good-looking, bursting with energy and kindness. Her name was Valentina Alexandrovna. The massage too was administered by a woman, Anna Ivanovna; and the physical exercises were taught by Ekaterina Akalovna. What long, sonorous and mellifluous names Russian women have! They almost answer to Manu's description. Let the names of women, said Manu, be good to pronounce—sweet, simple and pleasant; let them terminate in long vowels and resemble words of benediction.

Few foreigners have had an opportunity to live with Russians in a home for Russians as I had in Sochi. What struck me most was the spirit of comradeship which existed not merely between the staff and the inmates of the sanatorium but among the staff themselves. This was by no means the largest of the 56 sanatoria in Sochi and yet it had an ample staff, consisting of doctors and nurses, dentists and other specialists, a first-class catering establishment and miscellaneous officials such as a librarian, swimming instructor, cinema operator, a social secretary and numerous gardeners. They were all differently paid, but inequality of pay did not denote inequality in status. There were no 'superiors', 'subordinates' and 'menials' among them, as there used to be, even in terminology, in India in the old days. They all addressed one another by name; the juniormost nurse would call the seniormost doctor by his name without a 'Dr', 'Mr', 'Sir', or even 'Comrade'.

Our housemaid, Kila, was a stalwart Ukrainian. Normally she had an eight-hour working day, from 8 to 5 with an hour's break. But she came ungrudgingly for an additional hour or two, doing odd jobs such as preparing the bath for me at 8 p.m. and lighting the bath for my wife at 4 a.m. The waitresses too seemed to take a joy in their work. They treated the customers with an informality and familiarity which would have been misunderstood, and even resented, in other countries. We nicknamed one of the waitresses

Pochemu, which means 'Why?' Our meals consisted of many dishes which she served with much pleasure, explaining the virtues of each; and if we left any dish untouched or unfinished, she would say 'Pochemu?' with such an injured air that we felt obliged to offer her a full explanation of our conduct.

The cook, too, was an important person. We noticed it during the celebration of the 36th Anniversary of the October Revolution, which fell when we were in Sochi. Apart from meetings and processions, there was a luncheon party which merged into a tea party and went on almost up to dinner time. Though it was meant to be a ceremonial affair there were hardly any political speeches and the Russians behaved as primarily Russians and not as communists. The director of the sanatorium proposed, duty-bound, a toast to the Communist Party and to the Government. 'Now the official part of the proceedings is over,' he concluded, 'and you can enjoy yourselves.'

There were a few more toasts—to the Sanatorium, to its director and his wife, to the guests, to the doctors and nurses and, most important of all, to the chief cook. The cook, who was ceremoniously introduced to the party, took his seat at the table, proposed and seconded toasts, and danced with the sprightliest maiden as well as the stateliest matron.

One person of whom I have very pleasant memories is Makarova who was assigned to administer sulphur baths to me. She was a bright, vivacious and delightfully garrulous creature. When I was immersed in the bath she would come in order to take my pulse, though this was really the business of the nurse. When I was having a compulsory rest of twenty minutes after the bath, Makarova would come and sit by my side and chatter away. She would talk of Kalimin, her home town, and Leningrad, where she was educated, and India, as she fancied it, and Raj Kapur and Nargis, of whom she was a devoted fan. I was sorry to see the last of her when I had my last bath on the 20th of April, and she had tears in her eyes when I said good-bye to her

SOCHI 219

How quickly tears rise to the eyes of Russians! Mama and Vera, our maids, could never see a photograph of our grandchildren Unni, Kuttan or Chinna without shedding a tear. One evening Valia, our interpreter, came with us to see Othello. For the first two hours she faithfully played the role of interpreter, explaining a sentence here and a sentence there, but during the last scene she was strangely silent. She confessed to us later that she had been weeping. When our film, Do Bigha Zamin, was shown to a Moscow audience, not a Russian eye remained dry. And in 1956 when Khrushchev spoke on the cruelties of Stalin to his compatriots, he was reported to have been often on the verge of tears, and three times beyond it.

Shedding tears, however, is not an exclusively Russian trait. Harold Nicolson, in his fascinating book, Good Behaviour, writes that Englishmen used to indulge in this luxury unabashed almost up to the beginning of this century. Fox, Pitt and even Wellington wept effectively in public. It was what Nicolson calls the 'Tom Brown tradition' which made it ungentlemanly for men and unladylike for women to shed tears. Nevertheless, Nicolson records that in our own time, he had occasion to see Curzon and Churchill cry privately but very hard. Khrushchev was thus in good company.

In Sochi my greatest joy was to go to the seashore and watch the Black Sea in all her moods. She has as many as a variable woman. Generally she is calm and serene, but on the appearance of clouds she would bedome black and sullen, justifying her name. Sometimes, lashed by winds, she would turn into a foaming, boiling, raging cauldron. And I loved her in all her moods. Not Anujee. Prankly she is not over-fond of the sea; she prefers simpler pleasures. It thrills her to see the first rays of the sun lighting up the tops of the trees, to feel the gentle zephyr, stirring the leaves to life, and to hear the rustle of the leaves, like the hoarse whisper of first love into the ears of one's beloved. But the sea is altogether too noisy and boisterous and unpredictable for her. Still, moved by a sense of wifely duty, she would

often accompany me to the seashore. There I would read poetry to her and recite how

I have stared upon a dawn And trembled like a man in love;

and we would both laugh over the rest of the poem, which is not particularly complimentary to wives. would watch the sunset together and count the exact number of minutes and seconds the sun would take to sink into the sea after its lower rim had touched the watery surface. Sometimes the sun would dip into the sea like an enormous over-ripe orange; sometimes, like a sick man with a bloated face, making a last grimace at the world he was leaving; sometimes like a conqueror, red and angry that he has so little time to subjugate the world. One sunset which I shall never forget was that which we saw on 1 Novemher. There were a few clouds on the western horizon. They took on the most fanciful hues and produced the most fantastic effects. We almost felt that we were being treated to a celestial ballet of the seasons. When the sun was about to set the clouds turned green like trees in spring; and in between them there were pools of the deepest blue. Then they turned pink and red, like a forest in flames. The red, too, faded and gave way to the colours of autumn, gold and copper and purple; and finally, after the sun had set, all was gray and black, as in a snowless winter. Here was a heavenly dance of the seasons as beautiful as that which we saw in the Bolshoi theatre where, at the behest of the fairy godmother, ballerinas representing the different seasons and dressed in appropriate colours, dance in the presence of Cinderella, bringing her their most precious gifts.

3 LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD

FIRST GLIMPSE OF NOVGOROD

ONE of our most interesting trips in the USSR was by road to Leningrad. The road from Moscow to Leningrad runs straight as an arrow. There are few curves and hardly any ups and downs, and even the railway does not run so straight. The reason, I am told, is that the Emperor Nicholas I, who ordered the construction of the railway, took a piece of paper and drew with a foot-rule a line between Moscow and St Petersburg. His thumb made one involuntary little curve on the pencil line and the engineers faithfully followed it.

We spent the first night in Kalinin, 170 miles from Moscow. I had been there a couple of months earlier to unveil a statue of Afanasi Nikitin, a Russian trader who went to India in the middle of the fifteenth century and left interesting records of his stay in the Bahmani Kingdom. I attended the unveiling of this statue amidst great public enthusiasm. At a banquet given by the chairman of the local Soviet after the unveiling of the statue, Boris Polevoi, the celebrated author, related the story of Nikitin's love for an Indian girl and, looking chivalrously at Anujee, added that he was not surprised at the incident. In replying to his toast I said that, judging by the fervour with which he related this affair, we, who believe in rebirth, might think that Polevoi was Nikitin in one of his former births. Only, I added, I hoped that my wife was not the reincarnation of the girl concerned!

We left Kalinin in the morning, passed a church, crowned by a star instead of a cross, and crossed the Volga. To me it was a memorable experience. Memories came of historic events enacted on its banks; of invasions and counterinvasions: of the Volga Boat Song and of Chaliapin, who was its greatest singer and was destined to spend the last decades of his life in exile.

Towards the evening domes and spires and churches began to appear on the horizon. It looked as if beautiful pictorial illustrations, executed by some medieval divine on an illuminated manuscript, had been cut out and pasted in the sky. As we came closer we saw more and more churches. Our hotel, the Ilmen, named after a romantic lake close by, commanded a lovely view of the Kremlin and the Cathedral of St Sophia. I had a hurried bath and, leaving Anuice to her evening prayers, went and sat on a bench in front of our hotel, casting my eyes on as great a feast of beauty as God and man had ever combined to spread.

At my feet was the river Volkhova. To my mind, saturated with the legends of Sadko, Volkhova was less a river than a woman. She was a goddess who, unable to be united with her mortal lover, Sadko, turned herself into a river and lies eternally athwart his home town, Novgorod. 8.30 now; and in the evening light Volkhova looked still and sweet and sad, the very picture of a love which is unfulfilled and yet unforgetting. There were two ducks on the bank, proud mothers, surrounded by their ducklings and coaxing them to come out of the river and go to bed. Here and there, a canoe was drifting and occasionally the bosom of the Volkhova was agitated by the passage of an incongruous motor boat. On the opposite bank children were bathing and fishermen fishing. Above them were the red walls of the Kremlin, resembling the walls of the Red Fort of Delhi, built by Shahjahan. St Sophia's Cathedral, rising above those walls, also reminded me of Shahjahan. Lit by the last rays of the setting sun as well as the first beams of the rising moon, the domes of the Cathedral transported me to that monument of Shahjahan's love, the Taj Mahal in Agra. St Sophia's, even as the Taj, was a vision of beauty in white. Here, as in the Taj, was a central dome, surrounded by subsidiary domes. In both, the domes were of the bulbous

type though St Sophia's are less swelling, less sensuous than those of the Taj. Both pay homage to love; one to the love of God, and the other to the love of woman, exceeding the love of God.

CHURCHES AND CATHEDRALS

Novgorod was one of the most restful places in the Soviet Union. No factories defaced its precincts. No chimneys belching smoke defiled its air. There were no trams in Novgorod and even the buses seemed few and far between. Fifteen minutes' walk took one right out into the country. There were few modern institutions and even the House of Pioneers looked somewhat shy by the side of the Church of St Nicholas, eight hundred years old. The citizens of Novgorod went about in an easy, leisurely manner. Anujee asked the directress of our hotel whether there were any industries in the town. 'No,' she replied. 'We are an ancient town. Our only industry is to be ancient and to remain ancient.'

History tells us of many kings and queens who have been called, or have called themselves, Great. Among them are Peter the Great and Catherine the Great of Russia; Alfred the Great and Elizabeth the Great of England; Asoka the Great and Akbar the Great of India. But few towns have had the temerity to call themselves Great. One is Novgorod-Gospodin Veliki Novgorod—or Sir Novgorod the Great—that is how children in the old days were taught to call

Novgorod.

The greatness of Novgorod lives on in its churches and its cathedrals. The Yury Cathedral is a thousand years old. Our guide, who had a fine proletarian feeling, asked us to note that it had two stories; the upper story used to be reserved for the boyars or nobles, and the lower story for the common people. A steep flight of steps leads to the upper story; and our guide remarked that the gouty nobles of those days

preferred to climb those difficult steps and pray from above rather than mix with the common crowd. This Cathedral and the surrounding churches have suffered greatly from German occupation. The dome of one of the churches was entirely denuded of its gilt covering, which was then used by the Germans to make cigarette cases. The highest chamber in the Cathedral was used by German soldiers as a watch-tower from which they were perpetually on the look-out. We saw some lovely frescoes which fortunately escaped their attention, but a German contribution to the artistic wealth of this Cathedral remains in the series of sketches of buxom, amenable but ungainly women which decorate the walls.

The churches in Novgorod have suffered not merely from the vandalism of the Germans, but from the misplaced piety of the rich. The parvenus of the nineteenth century, seeing little beauty in the frescoes of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had them plastered over and then covered them with paintings executed by hack artists. In some churches these garish pictures are being removed, and below them one can see the desecrated but still gracious frescoes of the

Middle Ages.

Wherever we went we were surrounded by large crowds. Evidently we were the first Indians to visit Novgorod; and Anujee's sari, which seemed to have no beginning and no end, was an object of wonder. At first, the people looked at us with shy and uncomprehending eyes, but when they knew that we were Indians they became more friendly and communicative. On our way to the Yury Monastery a number of school girls from Countess Orlova's Institute greeted us. On emerging from the Monastery an hour later, we were pleasantly surprised to see these girls waiting for us with bouquets of wild flowers in their hands. An old woman told me that Prime Minister Malenkov had been in Novgorod the previous day and had addressed them. 'Won't you also say a few words to us?' she asked. Another old woman asked Valia, my interpreter, what my profession was. 'He is the Ambassador of India to the Soviet Union.' Valia replied, hoping she would be duly impressed. 'Yes, yes,' she said impatiently, 'I know he is Ambassador, but what does he do?' A question which I often asked myself.

ICONS AND FRESCOES

Nowhere have I seen more churches and cathedrals than in Novgorod. What impressed me was not merely the buildings themselves but, even more, the beauty of the icons and frescoes which they contained. I do not believe in the miracles of Christianity, and our Russian companion, Valia, a post-Revolution product, is openly contemptuous of them. Yet, when I looked at some of these icons with my profane twentieth-century eyes, I was moved to tears. On the face of the Virgin Mary, a perennial fountain of inspiration for artists, there is a look of compassion which seemed to affect even Valia. Again and again these icons have succoured not only men and women, but cities and kingdoms in the crises of their lives. The oldest and holiest of icons is that of a dark Virgin, about eighteen inches in height, which was painted in 1069. A miracle performed by this icon in the history of Novgorod is delineated in an elaborate series of frescoes, preserved in the Granovita Palace. The troops of Novgorod are locked in battle with the troops of Suzdai. Neither side being able to win a decisive victory, they start peace parleys. The Suzdal troops, while conducting negotiations, are preparing to resume the battle; and a Suzdal arrow strikes the Virgin's face. She becomes angry; the truce talks are broken off; the Novgorod troops plunge into battle and the Suzdalians are defeated

These frescoes and icons of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have a striking resemblance to the Italian paintings of the Middle Ages. Yet there is a difference. The paintings of Fra Angelico move man to renunciation; Russian paintings move him to contemplation. The Italian's

eyes are focused on the other world; Russian eyes are focused on this world as well as the other. The Italian paintings are idealistic; the Russian paintings are tinged with realism. For instance, in a fresco on the raising of Lazarus from death, a mourner is shown applying the edge of a robe to her nostrils, thereby suggesting that the body of Lazarus was already decomposed. The objects of nature and everyday life were drawn by Russian artists exactly as they saw them. In drawing things which they had not seen, however, they were at sea. The country around Novgorod is flat and the painters of Novgorod had never seen hills and mountains; they therefore represented them in their paintings with curious geometrical patterns.

One icon which particularly impressed me was that of a head of Christ, drawn by the famous painter Ushakov. There Christ's head is shown resting on a red towel. 'Why this towel?', I asked the director of the museum. He related a story regarding the genesis of this picture. For weeks and months Ushakov had been trying to visualize the face of Christ. He found it impossible to do so and was in despair. Great beads of perspiration broke out. Ushakov applied a towel to his face; and, lo and behold, it bore an imprint of the likeness of Christ, and all that he had to do was to reproduce it. In this picture, the eyes of Christ are full of a penetrating tenderness. They seem to rest on you from whichever direction you look at the picture. Such, said the director of the museum, are the eyes of God, which rest with equal impartiality on sinners and saints.

I. as an Fasterner, was specially interested to observe the Eastern element in these paintings. Art is universal; and to try to dissect it into its geographical components is a poor pastime. Nevertheless critics, in their fondness for generalization, have regarded certain qualities as typically Fastern or typically Western. For instance, the art of Greece is characterized by balance, refinement, elegance and humanity. The art of India, on the other hand, has greater depth, intensity, a certain other-worldliness and, in Western eyes, a bailling

incongruity. The paintings in Novgorod seemed to be a fine blend of both these sets of qualities.

Most of the painters of teons were anonymous. What spurred them to high artistic endeavour was not a hunger for fame, but the hope of salvation. Their aim was to glorify God, not to immortalize themselves. Yet the names of some of these painters have come down to us. One of the most famous among them was Theophanes the Greek. Before coming to Russia he had already made a name for himself as a painter in Byzantium. He spent forty years in and around Novgorod. We saw some of his paintings in the Church of Antoniev. The tall elongated figures of Adam, Abel, Elijah and Noah, so reminiscent of H Greco, are marked by a kind of primeval vigour and spiritual intensity. Side by side with these attributes, they also reveal another quality, which has reached its supreme expression in the dance of Nataraja in India and the art of the ballet in Russia, rhythm.

THE WHITE NIGHTS

We reached Leningrad on 21 June, 1954, after a tedious drive of about 200 kilometres from Novgorod. It was the season of the breli nocli, that is 'white nights', or nights without darkness. We had our first experience of a white night on our return from the theatre after seeing The Seven Beauties, a ballet based on an Azerbaijan story of the fifth century, written by Nizimi. The Seven Beauties began at 8 and went on till midnight. When we came out there were no street lights, and there was no need for them, and boys and girls were playing football on the deserted roads. A little later there was just a glimmer of darkness, soon dispelled by an unobtrusive dawn.

The white nights threw Anagee's daily programm, or prayer into confirm. Her usual regimen is to pray for a comple of hours before dawn and a couple of hours after sunset. But what was she to do in Leningrad? Pray for four hours from midnight when sunset and sunrise coincide? That would mean that she would have to do without sleep, for neither of us can stay in bed after 6 o'clock in the morning. She therefore decided to pray at any odd hour, hoping that the Almighty, who after all created the sun and is responsible for its vagaries, would understand her difficulty and forgive her delinquency.

Our first night was, or should have been, the whitest night of all. It was the 21st of June, the longest day of the year. We had planned to go out at midnight and see the dawn. Unfortunately, the sky became clouded and we thought there was no point in our going. I read a book and Anujee prayed for a couple of hours, leaving it to God to accept it as her morning or evening quota. At the end of her prayers she saw and heard batches of boys and girls, coming back from somewhere and singing away. Evidently, undeterred by the cloudy weather, they had been enjoying the white night. My sleep too was pleasantly disturbed. My son, Kumar, however, did not like the noises in the street, aggravated by the blowing of motor horns, in which the Leningrad drivers seemed to excel. He went to sleep with his windows and ventilators hermetically closed.

The next day's weather was worse. The heat was oppressive; it was the kind of damp heat which we never get in Moscow and always get in Malabar; and my sensitive back was beginning to react to it. In the evening there was a dust-storm, followed by rain. This did not last long but was strong enough to lay the dust. A little before midmight, we went out for a stroll. We sat on a bench near the statue of Peter the Great. In front of us was the Neva, purposefully flowing towards the Gulf of Finland. Beyond gleamed the gilt spike of the Fortress of Peter and Paul. We sat there long in the hope of seeing the sunset and the sunrise. We saw neither the only sign of sunrise was a faint pink glow which appeared on the face of the sky and disappeared as quickly as it rose

We returned to the Astoria in the small hours of the morn-

ing. The light was just the same as when we left; it was a kind of neutral light, hovering between light and darkness. Twenty-four hours of this light might be amusing for a few days and bearable for a few weeks, but must be maddening if one has to put up with it longer. Such, I thought, must be the light in purgatory to which the neutral spirits of this world whose souls have never been spurred to high endeavour, whether good or bad, are consigned after death.

A TOURIST'S PARADISE

The rise of St Petersburg often reminds me of the rise of Calcutta. Both sprang from a swamp in the eighteenth century. One is situated at the mouth of the Neva; the other at the mouth of the Hooghly. One faces the Gulf of Finland; the other the Bay of Bengal. One was the capital of the British Empire in India for less than two centuries; the other was the capital of the Tsarist Empire for a little longer. The capital of India was shifted to that ancient city, Delhi, in 1911; and the capital of Russia was shifted back to 'Holy Moscow' in 1917.

Yet there is a difference between Calcutta and St Petersburg. No one goes to Calcutta in search of great architecture. Tourists flock to India from all parts of the world to see her great monuments, but the places they visit are Delhi, Agra, Jaipur, Udaipur, Bijapur, Tanjore and Madurai, not Calcutta. But no lover of architecture can afford to miss St Petersburg

or, as it is now called, Leningrad.

We began our sight-seeing with a visit to the little cottage in which Peter lived from 1703 to 1708, supervising the construction of his city. The cottage consists of three rooms with wooden floors and wooden walls, made of local pine wood and covered with plaster. It was built by the soldiers who accompanied Peter to this spot on a shooting trip in the spring of 1703. It was then that Peter decided to open

a 'window on Europe' and to make it the capital of Russia. We saw a ballet, based on Pushkin's poem, 'The Bronze Horseman', which shows the splendid rise of St Petersburg' from the darkness of the forests, from the soft, watery marshes, proud and luxuriant'. It depicts the fate of two common individuals, Evgeny and Parasha, in St Petersburg They are deeply in love with each other and their only desire is to live a simple, happy life together. All their dreams are ruined by a flood, which is most realistically shown on the stage. When the flood has abated, Evgeny goes in search of his beloved. She is missing; and her little house, in which he had courted her, has been washed away. Evgeny is stricken with sorrow. Suddenly he sees the statue of Peter the Great

Who, motionless, aloft and dim, Our city by the sea had founded, Whose will was Fate. Appalling there He sat begirt with mist and air.

Evgeny is seized by a wild impulse to make an assault on the statue. He

clenched his teeth
And clasped his hands, as though some devil
Possessed him, some dark power of evil.
And shuddered, whispering angrely,
'Ay, architect, with thy creation
Of marvels ... Ah! beware of me!'

Hardly had he assaulted the statue when he felt that the Bronze Horseman was moving towards him. And then 'in wild precipitation he fled'. But the Horseman pursues him:

He hears behind him as it were Thunders that rattle in a chorus, A gallop ponderous, sonorous That shakes the pavement.

Evgeny goes raving mad and dies.

The ballet poses a fundamental problem, the relation between the state and the individual. How far is the State

justified in sacrificing the lives and happiness of thousands of individuals for some purpose which it regards as the common good? Pushkin was too great an artist to answer this question. Yet it is a problem which has troubled political

philosophers from time immemorial.

This problem continued to haunt us when we visited Russia's Bastille, the Fortress of Peter and Paul. Originally built as a fortress, it was used in subsequent years as a political prison. Its first victim was Alexis, Peter the Great's own son, who had become the focus of opposition to his reforms. Among the occupants were the leaders of the Decembrist movements, patriots involved in the attempt to assassinate Tsar Alexander II, including Alexander Ulyanov, the elder brother of Lenin, and some revolutionaries who took part in the rising of 1905. On 22 January 1905 a deputation of the workers of St Petersburg, led by Father Gapon and preceded by the sacred images, went to the Winter Palace to meet the Tsar and was mercilessly shot down. The rising of 1905 was a precursor of the Revolution of 1917. The Tsar, however, did not hear the note of doom. His diary for 22 January reads:

Pretty doings! Was busy until dinner and all evening. Went boating in a canoe. Got dressed and rode a bicycle to the bathing beach and bathed enjoyably in the sea. The weather was wonderful.

The most imposing monument in the Fortress of Peter and Paul is the Cathedral, built by Peter, with a gilt spike which was the tallest in Russia for many decades. The Tsars used to be buried in this Cathedral. Unfortunately we were unable to visit the imperial tombs as we were told that the Cathedral was undergoing repairs. Why the Emperors of Russia should have chosen, as their eternal resting place, a spot so near the abode of their victims, many of whom had been tortured to death, it is difficult to say. Anyhow, it showed that the Tsars died with a clear conscience. None believed more fervently in 'the divine right of kings to govern wrong 'One

is reminded of a conversation which took place between the last of the Tsars during the last year of his reign and the British Ambassador in St Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan. 'Your Majesty', admonished Sir George, 'should try and deserve the confidence of your people.' 'Is it not rather for My people,' replied the Tsar, 'to deserve My confidence?'

One of our most interesting visits in Leningrad was to Pushkin's home. It is a seven-roomed apartment, overlooking the Moika Canal, where Pushkin spent the last few months of his life. After the Revolution the house was restored to its original condition. In particular, Pushkin's study has been restored with meticulous care. We were shown the divan on which Pushkin used to recline and compose his poems, and the Dutch chest in which he used to keep his poems, and his Abyssinian grandfather, Hannibal, used to keep his wife's jewels. We also saw Pushkin's library of 4500 books in 14 languages, of which he could read six with ease and the others with the help of a dictionary. On his writing table we saw his quill pen, oil lamp, ink-stand, seal, scissors and call-bell. We were also shown the last book which he had been reading before he left for the fateful duel in which he lost his life, a children's book of fairy tales. In the adjoining room there is a small glass case, containing a lock of Pushkin's hair. The Russians look at it with as much veneration as the devotees of Buddha look at Buddha's relic in the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy.

When our guide related to us the details of the duel in which Pushkin died at the early age of 38 there were tears in her eyes. Though she must be relating this story day after day and many times a day to groups of visitors, her grief at the death of Pushkin seemed to well up ever fresh. The Russians are a sentimental people.

We also visited the world-famous palaces, museums and churches in Leningrad—the Winter Palace, beautiful in green and white, containing the Hermitage, which has a million objets d'art from Palacolithic times to Picasso, arranged in 600 rooms; the Summer Palace, an immense structure on

a cliff overlooking the Gulf of Finland, which was described by a foreign traveller as ' the love-sick dream of a giant, told by a mad poet ': St Isaac's Cathedral, with its great black dome, from which Pushkin saw and wrote of a beautiful sunrise over the Neva; the Church of the Resurrection. with its brilliant mosaics, warm and gay, like St Basil's in Moscow; and the solemn Kazan Cathedral where Prince Youssoupoff prayed for two hours before he set out, on the night of 29 December 1916, to decoy Rasputin to his house on the Moika Canal and murder him there. Anujee, too, wanted to pray in Kazan Cathedral, as it was Ekadasi and Aswathi, Kumar's birth star, but was unable to do so as it has been turned into a museum of the History of Religion. All the acts of inhumanity perpetrated in the name of religion are shown in this museum in the readily assimilable, and very attractive, form of pictures and illustrations.

Our guide showed us the scenes and objects connected with the Revolution of 1917 with greater zest than the monuments of Tsarist Russia. We saw the Finland Station, where Lenin arrived on 16 April 1917 in a sealed carriage from Switzerland; the armoured car from which he first proclaimed the coming victory of the proletariat: the balcony of Ksheshinskaya, a famous ballerina and the Tsar's mistress, from which Lenin gave darshan to a vast concourse of people who had assembled to welcome him; the Smolny Institute from which he directed the October Revolution; and the cruiser Aurora from which the first shots of the Revolution were fired.

If Leningrad saw the birth of the Soviet State, it has also played its part in preserving it. During the Second World War, the Germans besieged it for a thousand days and sought to starve it to surrender, but the city stood firm as a rock against aggression. We heard many stories of the fortitude and heroism displayed by the citizens of Leningrad during this gruelling ordeal. Our hotel, the Astoria, was then the abode of dying intellectuals, men who laid down their lives so that Russia might live.

4 STALINGRAD

JOURNEY TO STALINGRAD

WE visited Stalingrad in July, 1954. The journey from Moscow was a slow one. We covered a thousand kilometres in 36 hours. Thus the average speed of the train was considerably less than 20 miles an hour. The train seemed to be in no hurry. It lingered at wayside stations, and we saw thirsty men, women and children rushing to the cold water pipes, washing their hands and faces and their bare bodies, wetting their clothes, and drinking from under the pipe with their mouths upside down. We passed a number of interesting places-Kashira, an old and historic town; Michurinsk, formerly Koslov, now named after Michurin, the great scientist; and Paverine, where a great tank battle was fought during the war. Finally, at about 9 p.m., when the sun was hesitating whether to go to rest or not, the train moved slowly into Stalingrad to the accompaniment of loud-speakers playing the heroic tunes composed during Stalingrad's finest hour, its defence against the German onslaught in the winter of 1942.

The representatives of the City Council took us to a hotel which had been badly damaged during the war. While we were sitting there, discussing the programme for sight-seeing in Stalingrad, a telegram was handed to me, announcing that a daughter was born to Malini yesterday. I told my friends that my ninth grandchild had just arrived; and they all drank to its health. I then discovered that I had made an arithmetical mistake; it was not my ninth grandchild, but the tenth. This gave my hosts an excuse for another drink and another toast: 'May she be as noted for her beauty as Stalingrad is for heroism!'

MAMAI HILL

Soon after an enormous breakfast, we drove out to the top of a little hill, named after Mamai, the dreaded Tartar Khan of the fourteenth century. From here Stalingrad looked like a plantain leaf on the banks of the Volga. Not a green but a drying leaf, for the city, with its newly built houses, jostling against half-ruined buildings, looked yellow in the scorching sun. It was a strangely shaped city for, with a width of only two or three kilometres, it straggled for forty kilometres along the banks of the river. Here the irresistible German advance was halted and the myth of German invincibility was broken.

Our guide gave us a full account of the siege of Stalingrad. In particular, she gave a vivid description of the last act in this memorable drama. When a Russian emissary went into his headquarters, von Paulus was sitting holding a revolver which bore the inscription: 'From Hilter to Paulus.' He would not believe that he had been defeated. Then the twentyfour German Generals were made to march before him; and the terrible truth that he had been beaten dawned on him. The first words which he uttered were: 'Take me away from here to any place whence I cannot see the ruins of the city' -a city he had so utterly destroyed. The destruction of the city had begun at 4 p.m. on the 25th of August 1942 with a 48-hour continuous bombardment from the air. bombardment set the town on fire; and, by the beginning of 1943, 85 per cent of Stalingrad had been destroyed. 147,000 German corpses were found; and 48,000 Russians were dead

Our guide related many stories of Russian heroism. Most heroic of all was a sergeant called Pavlov, who defended his outpost against the numerically superior Germans for 58 days. His house, only 300 yards from the Volga, marked the farthest point to which the Germans advanced. We saw

it, a grimacing ruin amidst the many new buildings springing up all around it. On its walls we saw the words, written in blood by Pavlov's men: 'We will hold on unto death.'

While our guide was relating these incidents, we picked up empty cartridge cases and bits of shrapnel which still covered the hill of Mamai.

Stalingrad was being reconstructed on a scale worthy of its heroism. Through the centre of the city ran Stalin Prospekt, a highway 30 miles long and 90 yards wide. Intercepting it runs the Avenue of Heroes, 400 feet wide, from the railway station to the Volga. Many stately buildings were rising, such as the Gorki Theatre, the Victory Cinema, the Palace of the Soviets, the Palace of Labour, and Institutes of Engineering and Forestry. A planetarium, of which the entire equipment was presented to Stalin on his 70th birthday by the German Democratic Republic, had just been completed. Most striking of all was the Temple of Glory in which were kept the relies of the Battle of Stalingrad. Among them was the sword presented to Stalin by King George VI in token of his respect and admiration for the defence of the city. Roosevelt has recorded that Stalin was so overwhelmed by this gift that he kissed the sword with tears in his eyes.

We visited Stalingrad again in the spring of 1956. It was the height of summer when we came here last. Then hot winds were blowing from the Karakum desert and the steppes of Kazakhstan. The glare was terrible. The war had denuded Stalingrad not only of its buildings but of its trees. Now the authorities building a new Stalingrad, worthy of the heroism of the old, were taking special care to plant trees everywhere. The trees were taller than when we came here last; and the green belts between the different districts were greener. Before long Stalingrad will be a greener city than ever before, because an enormous hydro-electric dam, and a reservoir to be called the 'Stalingrad Sea', are to be constructed here. This dam is to be even bigger than the one at Kuibyshev on the middle Volga, and a number of irrigation channels will branch off in all directions from the

Stalingrad Sea. At this rate the Volga will soon cease to be a river and will become a chain of 'seas', linked together by a canal.

We saw the usual sights in Stalingrad and ended up on the historic Mamai Hill. This hill was beginning to look more like a park than a battlefield. Here too trees were being planted and lawns being laid out. This would have been impossible earlier, because on this hill the Russian and German armies had frequently clashed and it had been thoroughly blasted. Even though thirteen years had passed after this event, Kumar, who is becoming quite an expert in military strategy, picked up a number of cartridges, a hand grenade and a buckle from some unfortunate soldier's belt.

We went to a corner of the park where there was a monument in honour of fallen heroes, with an inscription: 'Here took place one of the stormiest and bloodiest battles in the war.' Our guide went on to explain how stormy and how bloody that battle was. More eloquent than his commentary was the sight of a woman in black, with a handkerchief to her eyes, looking intently at the monument and moving

quietly away as we approached it.

We also saw a film on the defence of Stalingrad. It was very different from the film on the same subject which was shown in Delhi at the Soviet Embassy in 1949. There, Stalin was shown as the prime organizer of victory. Here, Stalin did not appear at all. Full credit was given to the brilliance of the General Staff and the heroism of the common man. Our guide explained how 330,000 German soldiers, hardened in the battles of Western Europe, had taken part in the battle of Stalingrad, how 90,000 soldiers, including 24 Generals and 5000 other officers, had been taken prisoner, and how the bodies of 147,000 Germans were picked up after the battle and burned in a heap. The film on the defence of Stalingrad showed not merely the grandeur of the battle but its ghastliness and the pity of it all. Our ancient epic poets, bewildered at the phenomenon of recurring wars among men, sought to explain it by saying that from time

to time the long-suffering Earth would go to Brahma, the creator, and complain of the heavy load of humanity she had to carry. Then Brahma, taking pity on her, would send someone, a benefactor or a malefactor, to ease her burden. Hitler was one such, but he lacked even the grandeur of an epic wrong-doer like Ravana or Kamsa.

THE VOLGA-DON CANAL

At 6 o'clock on 10 July 1954 we left Stalingrad for Rostov. Our ship was called the Rosa Luxemburg, after the famous German revolutionary of that name. There was another ship in the harbour, a floating sanatorium, which was being used to take people out on fortnightly cruises and give them rest and treatment. On the deck of that ship we saw a portly, middle-aged individual, who was being taught physical exercises by an instructress who was young enough to be his daughter, ingratiating enough to be his mistress and masterful enough to be his wife.

Soon after we left Stalingrad a gentle breeze sprang up, cooling our perspiring bodies—for the temperature had been over 100°F.—and curling the Volga into ripples of laughter. Three weeks previously, we were near the source of the Volga; and now we saw it flowing brimfully and majestically towards its goal in the Caspian, with the serene air of a philosopher who is about to attain the Infinite. There also appeared a rainbow in the sky which was perfectly reflected in the river. It looked like the sash of some Order of the Sky, which the Architect of the Universe had conferred on the Volga for its meritorious services to humanity.

Suddenly a change came over this scene of almost uncarthly beauty. The rainbow proved to be a portent. The gentle breeze was no longer gentle; it gathered force and became a furious wind, lashing the river into foaming billows. Clouds, no bigger than a man's hand, appeared in the west, overspreading the skies. And great drops of rain beat like slanting arrows on the passengers on deck and sent them scurrying into their cabins. But the storm subsided as quickly as it arose, and there stood before us a mighty statue, so colossal in its dimensions, so powerful and so self-assured, that it looked as if it could let loose, or bring under control, even the forces of nature. That was the statue of Stalin.

Two hundred and fifty years ago there lived a master-mind who dreamt of uniting the Volga with the Don, but at that time science was not sufficiently advanced. The project was taken up by the Soviet Government before the war but was interrupted by the German invasion. Work was resumed at the end of 1950 and completed in the middle of 1952. On 1 June 1952 the builders of the canal reported in a letter to Stalin, 'The waters of the two great Russian rivers, the Volga and the Don, met on 31 May, at 13.55 hours.'

This project involved the construction of a navigation canal 101 kilometres long, a number of irrigation canals, a hydro-electric system together with an earth dam 12.75 kilometres long, and new roads and railway lines. It has been claimed with pride that it was completed in three years whereas the Panama Canal, which involved about the same volume of excavation work, took nearly thirty years to build. By the construction of the Volga-Don Canal, the White, the Baltic, the Black, the Caspian and the Azov Seas have been united into a single water-transport system; and Moscow has become a Port of Five Seas.

It was no easy task to connect the Volga with the Don. The difficulty was that the Don flowed at a higher level than the Volga, 44 metres higher. And the intervening land was even higher; it rose 88 metres above the Volga. What the engineers had to do was to make the river Volga flow upwards and then downwards into the Don.

I had read that this was accomplished by the construction of a number of locks, but I must confess that until I saw these locks I could not visualize them. Soon after we had passed Stalin's statue, we saw two iron gates, a hundred tons

in weight, opening respectfully sideways. We then entered a short and narrow stretch of water, with walls 40 feet high on both sides. It gave us an cerie feeling to be in this watery cubicle. We felt like prisoners kept in some underground cell, or like passengers in a doomed ship, which was being offered as a sacrifice to some subterranean deity, or like animals confined in a pit, lest they should jump out into the open. We then saw the gates in front being raised slightly so as to let the water in. The water came, at first gently and noiselessly, and afterwards with a deafening uproar. the influx of water, the ship started rising until, in a few minutes, we reached the top of that watery chamber. Then we could see the setting sun and the rising moon; we could once more breathe God's own air, so different from the stagnant air at the bottom of the lock. The gates in front then opened and we sailed out into the canal. The whole operation was dexterously performed in no more than fifteen

During the first three hours, we passed through a succession of locks. We kept on going in and out of these locks as Jawaharlal Nehru, in the first twenty-five years of his active life, used to go in and out of political prisons. By dinner time we had gone through half a dozen locks and risen some 200 feet above the Volga. We were in high spirits; and it was not until after midnight that we went to sleep.

At 3 in the morning I woke up and found that the sun was already rising. There was magic in the morning twilight and I strolled on to the deck in my pyjamas. The whole world seemed asleep, except for two oldish men, who had been fishing. Had they just got up, I wondered, or had they been fishing all night? All my fellow passengers were asleep. The night was so hot that they slept with windows open and curtains drawn. How ungainly human beings look when they are asleep! One man was in shorts, with his legs thrust out of the window. A woman was asleep with mountains of flesh floating over her. In another cabin a woman was snoring away, and her husband sleeping peacefully as if his wife's

snore was music in his ears. I walked round the deck and found three persons asleep in deck chairs. One of them had curled himself up in such a way that he looked like a child in the womb. A woman who, painted and powdered, seemed attractive during the day, looked ghastly and cadaverous in sleep. A sixteen-year-old boy was sleeping comfortably on a deck chair. He reminded me of Lucius in Julius Caesar, and I felt like waking him up, saying:

Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter; Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber; Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies Which busy care draws in the brains of men; Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

Presently we entered yet another lock, different from those we had passed through before dinner. Now the ship, instead of rising, began to sink. This was effected by a process the reverse of what we had seen before: water was now being let out of the lock instead of into it.

While I was watching this a middle-aged woman in uniform joined me and set about arranging the deck chairs. I took her to be a stewardess, but the next evening the Captain of the ship, who dined with us, told us that she was the Vice-Captain. When I told my companions of my experience, Vasist, the leader of the Indian Railway delegation, said that he was going to get up at 3 o'clock that night. But, said the Captain with a twinkle in his eyes, her husband was on board. What was worse, they were on their honeymoon. Lest they should be separated during the first year of their marriage, the authorities had considerately arranged to give him a small job on the ship.

I strolled up and down the deck for an hour or two. By 5 30 the sun was high above the horizon and the day was beginning to be hot. Nevertheless there was no sign of life on board. I myself returned to my cabin and again went to sleep. When I woke up we were no longer in a canal but seemed to be on the sea. And a sea the Russians call it, the

Tsimlyanskoe sea. It is a large expanse of water formed by the construction of a dam on the Don. All day long we sailed on this 'sea'.

The ship's passengers formed a motley crowd—soldiers, sailors, civil servants, peasants, workers and a pathetic little group of some 35 men who were deaf and dumb. These men, however, did not consider themselves pathetic. There was no lack of conversation among them. They chattered away among themselves, not with their tongues but with signs and gestures. They seemed to have a language of their own. They were being taken on a holiday cruise by a kind old woman, who had been the head of an institution for the deaf and dumb for four decades.

The most arresting figure on board was a Cossack girl. What made her so arresting was her dark complexion, darker even than ours. Naturally dark, she told us that she had been trying to make her skin still darker by using creams and lying about in the sun. In her dark face was set a pair of blue-grey eyes, which gave her a look of singular piquancy. Alive in every limb, she moved about the ship as if she owned it. And many doubtless would have liked to own her.

At about 9 in the evening, the sun, flattened out by its long journey, went down and an oval moon rose in the sky. The stars too began to appear one after another. As if to put them in the shade, a thousand lights began to twinkle in the distance. They were from the Tsimlyanskoe hydroelectric system. Captain Kuligan, who joined us for dinner, explained to us that it was a multipurpose project which regulated the river, facilitated navigation, provided irrigation, promoted cultivation and produced electricity.

At about midnight we crossed two more locks. We thus descended another 60 feet and came down to the level of the Don, which was still 44 metres above the level of the Volga.

We were now out of the 'sea' and on the river. The Don was a sluggish river and its occasional tendency to exuberance has been curbed by the construction of the Tsimlyanskoe dam. The Don did not run in a straight line; it would me-

ander to the right or to the left, like a man with a lazy mind who harbours no convictions and browses over all philosophies. However, as such men usually are, the Don too was very friendly. Cattle were grazing on its banks, men were bathing and children were playing in the Pioneer Camps established for the summer. I lay about in a deck chair and read Mikhail Sholokhov's And Quiet Flows the Don. Very quietly indeed did the Don flow. It was difficult to imagine that on its banks used to live a virile and violent people, whose loves and lusts, feuds and factions, are so skilfully portrayed by Sholokhov. Their private adventures have now given way to public order and are only remembered by readers of fiction.

On the evening of the 12th at 9 o'clock we reached our destination, Rostov. I put my baggage in a taxi and was on the point of leaving for the airfield when Mme Yakovleva, the Vice-Chairman of the City Executive Committee, arrived panting, pulled my things out of the taxi, put them in her own car, and whisked me away to the airfield. There she purchased my tickets, treated me to an excellent dinner and booked a room for me in the retiring rooms. I did not know what to admire more, her kindness, her hospitality, her charm or her boundless energy. In Russia, woman is the equal of man in every walk of life. It is man who is lagging behind, for there is one function which is still beyond him; he cannot bear children.

5 AZERBAIJAN

A CITY OF OIL

In 1955, after our annual visit to Sochi on the Black Sea we went by train to Baku on the Caspian coast. This was very different from the Black Sea region. There were no great trees, no great mountains rising from the sea. Only oil, oil everywhere—oil pipes, oil tanks, oil installations, sand and mud from which oil oozed, like sweat dripping from the unexercised body of an unhealthy moneylender. Presently a forest of chimneys appeared, showing how highly industrialized this region had become. A violent jerk, the train came to a standstill, and we were in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, the southernmost seaport in the Soviet Union and one of the richest centres of oil in the world.

The city of Baku is divided into two regions, Chorni Gorod (black town) and Byeli Gorod (white town). The Byeli Gorod is the main residential area; and the Chorni has hundreds of factories, belching smoke. A drive through Chorni Gorod left on us the same crude sense of power as our drive through Silesia last year. There power came from coal; here from oil.

Most of the oil is extracted from the Apsheron Peninsula, but now it is beginning to be extracted from the bed of the sea as well. It has been known for some time that the Caspian Sea is a fertile source of oil but the difficulty was that oil could not be extracted from it without having a land base on which the oil-boring machine could be located. This difficulty has now been got over by the creation of a number of artificial islands in the Caspian Sea. We visited one of those islands, 70 kilometres from Baku. In that island oil

was being extracted from a depth of 2500 feet. There are, however, machines capable of boring down to 5000 feet.

In the evening we were shown the film of a man-made island even bigger than the one which we had visited. There a regular township has grown, with oil-boring engines, prefabricated houses, cinema halls, sports grounds and dance floors. Three years ago the sea, covered with oil, caught fire; and the film showed how the workmen on the island struggled with the fire for six days and nights, brought it under control, and thus saved themselves and their island

from destruction. It was an eerie sight.

If Baku is a city of oil, it is also a city of winds. The name is derived from two Persian words which mean 'driven by wind'. Our friends told me that strong winds would be blowing in the Baku region for 300 out of 365 days. We certainly had not struck a windless patch. When we were taken to see a factory manufacturing synthetic rubber we were almost blown off our feet; and Anujee's sari got so puffed up that she walked like a balloon on two legs! In the evening the rains came; and we were afraid that the next morning's May Day celebrations were going to be ruined. Hearing of Anuice's religious prochvities, our hosts implored her to pray for good weather. In the morning it was not clear whether God had answered her prayers or not, for it drizzled but did not rain. In the afternoon, however, there was glorious sunshine, in which we saw an exciting football match between Baku and Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Our Azerbaijani friends laughingly suggested that after all Anujee's Indian god was a long way off and that her message could not have reached him in time to send good weather for the morning celebrations, but must have reached him before the evening's match.

We happened to be in Baku on May Day and attended the ceremonial parade. Stalin's pictures were conspicuous by their absence. Baku, however, has special associations with Stalin's life: it was his training-ground as a revolutionary. There he learnt how to deal with the masses and received, to use his own phrase, his 'revolutionary baptism in combat'. Passing under different names—Koba, Gagoz Nishardze and Zakhar Gregorian Malikyants—evading the police, hiding among the Tartars in the Balakhna oilfields and lecturing, agitating and pamphleteering, Stalin kept up the revolutionary flame among the workers of Baku, whom Lenin praised as 'our last Mohicans of the political mass strike'.

At the end of Stalin's life, Baku was very different from what it had been when he was there as agitator. In the nineteenth century the oil of Baku had been mainly in foreign hands, and the workers were a motley crowd. Russians and Armenians made up 48 per cent; 42 per cent were Persians, Tartars and Lezgirs; and 10 per cent were Turks. They were too disorganized to be able to stand up to their employers. I was told that in many oilfields there was no regular system of payment; wages were often called bakshish, or, as Stalin said, beshkesh. The Muslims lived in a world of their own. Blood-feuds were not uncommon; self-flagellation was practised by some tribes; and women were in purdah. To have transformed such a primitive, amorphous community into a modern, industrialized State must be reckoned one of the major achievements of Soviet rule.

INDIA AND AZERBAIJAN

On the evening of our arrival we went to see an opera, Leila-Majnun. This was the first opera to appear on the Baku stage and has been running without a break for forty-six years. The music had a haunting quality about it and was perfectly entrancing. I was glad that the new-fangled and somewhat superfluous orchestra did not spoil it; for most of the time the orchestra kept quiet. I used to think that the music of Uzbekistan was closest to the music of India, but the music of Azerbaijan seems to be even closer. It has an

affinity not merely with the music of North India but with that of the South.

The people, too, seemed to have an affinity with North Indians and e-pecially with Kashmiris. In fact Kashmir is well known in Azerbaijan. Under a long-standing custom, a bridegroom in Azerbaijan is expected to present his bride with a Kashmir shawl and there is hardly any household in Azerbaijan without a shawl from Kashmir. There is a long-standing trade connexion between India and Azerbaijan. Silk merchants used to come here, mostly fromt Mulan and its neighbourhood; and there used to be a Multani Serai in Shimakha, the capital of Azerbaijan from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. All traces of this Serai and almost all traces of Shimakha itself have been wiped out by an earthquake. The connexion with Multan, however, survives in a quaint colloquial expression, still current. Apparently the merchants from Multan tried to pick up the Azerbaijani language, but spoke it badly; and even today when an Azerbaijani child speaks in a crude or ungrammatical way the elders ask, 'Why do you speak Multani?'

Most surprising of all was to find an Indian temple in the vicinity of Baku. Formerly regarded as Zoroastrian in origin and frequently referred to by foreign travellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a fire worshipper's temple, it appears to have been a Hindu shrine. The object of worship used to be what foreign travellers called 'the inextinguishable fire', which might have been some form of gas, as in the sacred Jwalamukhi temple in the Himalayas. There were a number of cells in which pilgrims lived, and perhaps merchants halted on their way to the interior of Azerbaijan. The entrance to these cells still bears inscriptions in stone, in Devanagari, Gurmukhi and Persian, containing an invocation to God, a quotation from the Scriptures, the name of the donor of the cell, sometimes the name of the mason, and the date. Architecturally there is nothing striking about this temple. Yet it is a touching reminder of the spirit of adventure and piety which led Indians in past centuries to seek a livelihood on the coast of the Caspian Sea and to build a second Jwalamukhi there.

ASTRAKHAN

A year after this first visit to Baku we went to the Caspian coast again. This time we went by river and our destination was Astrakhan. We landed in Astrakhan on 25 June at the hottest hour of the day, 2 p.m. It gave us a regular Indian feeling. Astrakhan was as hot as any Indian town in summer: its flies were equally annoying, its flowers equally sweetsmelling, its melons equally succulent, and its dust equally pervasive. And in order to make me feel completely at home, the tune 'Awara' was played wherever I went, and a picture of Lakshmi was hung above my bed in our hotel.

Astrakhan, like Calcutta, is situated about 50 miles from the sea, and like the Ganges the Volga forms an enormous and intricate delta. The mayor told me that in August the lagoon is covered with lotus flowers. In legend the lotus has an Indian engin. One of the Khans of this place had a beautiful wife called Astra. She comracted a serious illness from which there was no hope of recovery. A faqir told the Khan that far, far away in the east there was a country in which grew a lovely flower, the fragrance of which would cure his wife. Thereupon the Knan set out to India and after various adventures managed to obtain the seed of the lotus. He returned to Astrakhan only to find that his wife was dead. Thereupon he cast the seed into the lagoon, and it blossoms beautifully every year in the summer.

Astrakhan used to be the centre of the Kalmucks, a nomad people who migrated with their tents, carts and flocks from West China in the middle of the seventeenth century, in search of fresh woods and pastures new. For the last three centuries they have been the only Buddhist people in I urope. At many of the critical moments in Russian history, the Kalmucks stood by Russia. In the eighteenth century they

joined the fight against Charles XII, whose soldiers, says a Kalmuck poem, 'Yorel', 'were more numerous than ants, more blood-thirsty than jackals, more crafty than snakes'. They also fought in the Seven Years' War and took part in the conquest of East Prussia. Ten Kalmuck regiments fought against Napoleon and three of them entered Paris on horseback in 1814. To quote from 'Yorel' again:

Fogether with the Russian cagles the Kalmucks defended their land Against greedy Napoleon
Who wanted to briefe the whole world
As if it were his horse.

Thus during three centuries,
In countless battles,
The earth was soaked
With the blood of Kalmucks and Russians.

After the Revolution, the right of the Kalmucks to autonomy was recognized and in 1920 the Kalmuck Autonomous Province was founded. In 1933 it was raised to the status of the Kalmuck Autonomous Republic. After the Second World War, however, when the Kalmucks were suspected of pro-German sympathies, the Kalmuck Autonomous Republic, like the Volga German Republic next door, was abrogated and the Kalmucks were dispersed in distant areas.

If in the time of the Kalmucks the prosperity, such as it was, of Astrakhan depended on cattle, its prosperity today depends almost entirely on fish. More than half the adult population is engaged in some way or other in the fishing industry—in catching or processing tish. I visited the Mikoyan Fishing Combine, the largest of the kind in the Soviet Union. It was the slack season, no fishing being allowed in the river between June and September and in the sea between June and October. Fish-eating fishes, however, can be caught at any time of the year. I was greatly interested to see the production of caviare. There are caviare-tasters even as there are tea-tasters. Like tea-tasters they are not allowed to smoke; but unlike tea-tasters they are allowed, and indeed

encouraged, to drink cognac, for that alone can neutralize the effects of the large quantities of caviare which they have to consume every day. On the whole, the Mikoyan Combine seemed to conduct its operations with the maximum of efficiency and the minimum of smell. We spent a whole day there and were greatly impressed by everything we saw. However, the sight of huge quantities of fish being boiled in oil, passed through pipes, cooled down, packed in tins and then kept for ten days in a temperature of 37 degrees Centigrade so that any bacteria in them might show themselves and swell up the tins, was not exactly appetizing. After my visit to the Mikoyan Factory, I shall never again be able to taste tinned fish. Fortunately for me. caviare is often packed in glass containers.

The mayor howed me the site of an old Indian colony which flourished in Astrakhan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Indians lived in the heart of the city in what was called Indian Street. I was told that they played a significant part in the trade between Russia and the Trans-Caucasus region, Iran and India. The Tsar took a special interest in them. Among the articles imported and sold by them were carpets, silk, cotton fabrics, copper, leather goods, wool, gold and silver and precious stones. Some of them took Russian wives and acquired Russian nationality. Among them was one Mogundasov (i.e., son of Mohan Das), a wealthy Indian merchant who had his own boats and fishing waters, owned a house worth 60,000 roubles and transacted business amounting to 100,000 roubles in 1826.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there were Indian merchants also in other cities of the Soviet Union, such as Moscow and Yaroslav. Many of them must have travelled up and down the Volga. It is a pity that none of them have left any accounts of their travels, as an enterprising Englishman, Anthony Jenkinson, the manager of the Muscovy Company in Moscow, has done. In 1558 he went on a journey down the Volga in company with the Governor-designate to Astrakhan, who had '500 great boates under his conduct'.

Jenkinson found Kazan 'a fayre town with a strong castle. Being in the hands of the Tartarres, it did vex more the Russes in their warres than any other nation'. Jenkinson describes the nomad tribes who lived on the banks of the Volga and subsisted on meat and milk. From Astrakhan, he crossed the Caspian Sea into China. He returned to Russia the next year and presented the Tsar with a 'white cowes taile of Cathay'. Perhaps it was Jenkinson who inspired Marlowe to write, in Tamburlaine the Great, of

. . . Christian merchants, that with Russian stems Plough up huge furrows in the Caspian Sca.

Perhaps Milton himself was indebted to Jenkinson for his reference to Astrakhan. How one wishes that some twentieth-century Milton or Marlowe in India or Russia would turn into a poem or ballet the lovely legend of the Khan of Astrakhan's quest for the lotus in India, a legend to which the yearly efflorescence of the lotus in the lagoons at the mouth of the Volga still bears testimony!

6 THE UKRAINE, MOLDAVIA AND THE CRIMEA

THE HOUSE OF TURGENEY

Voi take once said that the climate of Russia consists of nine months of winter and three months of foul weather. This was a typical piece of Voltairian cynicism, for the Russian summer, though short, is generally glorious. In 1956, however, the weather-men had predicted that the summer would be bad and the autumn good. The summer could not have been worse. The other half of the forecast also came true, for autumn opened on 1 September with glorious sunshine. No longer was Nature shedding tears of rain or gnashing her teeth in thunder as she had been doing throughout July and August. Now she behaved like a nun who, having been pursued by the Hound of Heaven for years, suddenly decided to resist him once and for all and give herself up to the world in all her finery.

It was on such a day that we set out on the longest car trip we had undertaken in the Soviet Union. During this trip we covered a good bit of Central Russia, the Ukraine, Moldavia and the Crimea. On leaving Moscow we saw the usual north Russian seenery for the first 200 kilometres. On both sides of the road were woods of buch, occasionally variegated by clumps of oak. The younger buch trees were already changing colour, but the oak remained unaffected, thus earning its name of winter oak. Wherever there were fields, we saw winter wheat being sown, so called because the wheat now sown would remain under show throughout the winter and be ready for harvest in the summer.

The 1st of September marks not only the beginning of autumn but the opening of the school year. We saw hundreds of school children in brand new or carefully ironed uniforms going to school, some merrily, others gloomily, grumbling why the school could not have opened two days later on a Monday instead of on a Saturday. We also saw a number of road-signs and posters, many of which were addressed to the voditeli or drivers. Anajee, who is becoming an expert not merely in colloquial Russian but in Russian etymology, told us that voditeli came from voda or water, indicating that the earliest drivers of vehicles in Russia were those who plied barges on the great water-routes of the Volga, the Dnieper and the Don, along which flowed the earliest Russian civilization.

Some 200 kilometres from Moscow we passed Tula, noted for centuries for its samovars and guns. A little beyond Tula a familiar road branched off to Yasnaya Polyana, Tolstoy's

home.

A hundred kilometres beyond Yasnaya Polyana lay the town of Mtsensk, tull of churches, some of which, said Valia, were 'acting churches', by which she meant that they were still being used. Just before we reached Mtsensk we saw a signpost to the museum of Turgenev. Thither we went over celling hills. The museum is located in the house in which Turgeney lived as an exile from 1852 to 1854. The arrangement of the museum is calculated to impress visitors not only with the genius of Turgenev as an artist but the decadence and cruelty of the feudal background from which he spring and which he found revolting. We were shown the geneal rocal tree which snowed that Turgeney was descended on his placinal ade from one Turgen, a fartar who lived in the litteents century and was converted to Christian ty. The most enterprising member of the family was one Lutovinos, Largenes's maternal grand-ancle, who owned 10,000 bectares of land and built a 49-roomed house, which was destroyed by tire in 1996, a church which could still be seen, and a mausoleum for himself. He also laid out a beautiful park in which he planted full-grown trees, transported from distant gardens by his sweating serfs. Turgenev's own father was comparatively poor—he owned only 120 serfs—but he married a rich woman ten years older than himself. This woman was the embodiment of cruelty. She used to treat her servants like chattels; the more devoted they were to her the more she ill-treated them. We were shown a register in which she used to enter meticulously the punishments which she awarded to her servants. Turgenev has related how he himself used to be beaten by her every day. His only joy in childhood was the company of an old serf who was literate and used to read out to him Russian folk tales and thus generated in him an interest in Russia's storied past.

We were shown a number of portraits done by famous painters. The most interesting was one of Turgenev with a gun, a dog and a serf. The talks which he had with all manner of people in the course of his hunting expeditions formed the material for his Diary of a Sportsman. There he depicted the peasants in a sympathetic light and their land-lords as cruel and avaricious men. It was the which caused the Tsar to exile him to the village in which the hour is located, though the ostensible reason was that he had expressed some obnoxious sentiments in his obituary of Gogol.

Our guide then took us for a walk in the park and showed us the trees which Turgenev had planted; the favourite lanes in which he used to stroll with Savina, a great actress of that time; the stables where his mother used to get the servants beaten; the open space under the great trees where he used to play chess with his cronies or dance with his girl friends; and the grove in which he wrote his Rudin in seven weeks. 'Nowhere', wrote Turgenev, 'can one write better than in a Russian village, where the very air is full of thoughts.'

Turgeney died in France in 1883. His last wish was that his body should be taken to St Petersourg and barried by the side of his friend, Belinsky. We saw on the walls of the museum an extract from a letter which he wrote to his friend

a few days before his death. 'Bow low', he said, 'to my house, to my park, to my young oak and to my motherland which I shall never see again.' We, too, bowed to the oak. now 140 years old.

THE BLACK BARTH

After leaving Turgenev's home we entered what geographers call the black earth of Russia. From Orel onwards the soil became blacker until it culminated in the rich, fertile

fields of the Ukraine.

Even before we reached Orel, the countryside began to look different from what it did in the Moscow-Leningrad region. There were no more woods; even trees were scarce. This was reflected in the construction of the houses. The houses in Central Russia were made not of wood but of stone. We were now in the Central Russian uplands, broken up by numerous gullies and ravines, caused by erosion and the destruction of forests. There was some cultivation here and there, but the soil seemed unfertile and crops were poor. In Tsarist times this region had suffered greatly from the wasteful farming methods of that period, but now all land had been collectivized and was being cultivated by means of mechanized ploughs, tractors and combines.

On the afternoon of the 2nd, at the 700th kilometre from Moscow, we crossed the border of Russia into the Ukraine. Here the middle Russian uplands merged imperceptibly into the steppe-imperceptibly, because the steppe had been converted to cultivation. Between the Russo-Ukrainian border and Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, not an inch of land was left uncultivated. The Ukraine is an area of intensive agriculture and covers about a fifth of the total sown area of the USSR. It produces nearly a quarter of the grain and two-thirds of the sugar of the entire Soviet Union. There were vast helds of maize and sunflower, and wheat was beginning to sprout. There were orchards, too, and long lines of poplar which gave a Kashmir touch to the scenery. The villages in the Ukraine were much bigger than those in Russia and the people looked more prosperous.

We spent the second night in Kharkov, which was the capital of the Ukraine until 1934. The approach to Kharkov was beautiful—a lovely avenue of poplars on both sides of the road and thick forests beyond, in which were located children's homes, pioneer camps and sanatoria. It is also

a great industrial centre.

The entire region through which we passed bore the ravages of war. Orel, where we spent the first night, had the distinction of being the city in the Soviet Union to which the first salute was fired in the great victory parade in Moscow in 1943, for it was the first city to have been liberated from the Germans With it was bracketed another city, which we passed at noon on 2 September, namely Belgorod, 'the white city', so called because of the neighbouring chalk hills from which half of all the writing chalk of the USSR is produced. Between Orel and Belgorod lies the more famous city of Kursk, which saw some savage battles during the Second World War. The approach to Kursk was marked by a number of memorials to fallen soldiers, war graves and captured tanks with appropriate inscriptions. Valia described vividly how this whole region had been covered with corpses and how the thaw used to bring the bodies out of the snow in which they had lain during the winter months. And when we picked some tender maize from the fields and ate it, the eerie thought struck us that it might have sprung from the corpse of some unknown soldier.

Again and again in the course of history the black earth, over which we motored so easily and comfortably, had been turned red by hordes of invaders from the Last as well as the West, from the Lartars of the twelfth century to the Germans of the twentieth. In the eighteenth century this operation was performed by the Swedes; and we spent a couple of hours on the historic battleheld of Poltava, some 150 km

on the road from Kharkov to Kiev. We saw the battlefield and visited the museum. The director explained to us, with the aid of maps, pictures and quotations from the diaries of Peter the Great as well as from Pushkin's poem ' Poltava'. how Peter the Great decisively defeated Charles XII of Sweden and thus established his country as a great power in Europe. On the peaceful field by which we stood in silence, there had lain, on 21 June 1709, the bodies of 9234 Swedes and 1345 Russians. We saw the Bratskaya Mogila, 'the brothers' grave', in which the Russians had all been buried together. We also saw the monument which the Russians had chivalrously erected on the site of battle with the inscription, 'Eternal glory to the Swedish heroes who were killed in battle.' It called to my mind the chivalrous toast which was proposed at a banquet given on the night of the victory by Peter the Great, who had learned military strategy from the Swedes, in honour of the defeated Swedish Generals. 'I drink,' he said, 'to my teachers in the art of war.' 'It is well, replied the Swedish General, that you have paid us for your first lesson.'

KIEV, PAST AND PRESENT

During my first year in Moscow, Kiev was out of bounds for foreigners. Now it was swarming with them. A delegation of Indian singers and dancers, numbering 35, was at the Ukraine hotel, and we ourselves stayed at the Intourist. In the dining-room one heard a babel of tongues, American ringing louder than the rest.

Our first visit was to the zoo to see Ravi and Shashi, two baby elephants, aged 18 and 15 months, sent last year by Nehru as presents from the children of India to the children of Russia. In a letter to me he described them as 'two Ambassadors from India to the Soviet Union, in addition to yourself'. 'Only,' he added, 'they will be specially accredited

to the children of the Soviet Union.' Since I saw them last, Ravi and Shashi had grown bigger and naughtier. They would put the tips of their trunks into the pockets of the visitors in order to see whether there were any sweets for them there. Nehru's charming message to the children of Russia was displayed prominently in Russian and in Ukrainian near the abode of Ravi and Shashi.

On the morning of the 5th the Minister of Culture took us for a walk on the ridge overlooking the Dnieper. A glorious river, so broad that Gogol said that 'a bird cannot fly over it at one stretch', and dotted near Kiev with a number of lovely islands which are now being turned into hydroparks. During our walk the present of Kiev jostled with its past. We passed the statue of Vatutin, the 43-year-old general who liberated the Ukraine from the Germans and died fighting; a dental college; a botanical institute; and the quaint church of St Andrew, architecturally at once Eastern and Western, pagan and Christian. In the distance lay the industrial quarter of Podol, which produces machine tools, motors, aircraft parts, boilers, agricultural implements, cycles and motorcycles, electrical goods and equipment for chemical and sugar industries. Watching these multifarious activities there stands the magnificent statue of King Vladimir, who adopted Christianity in 989,

Next day our party went in different directions. Anujee and Valia went icon-hunting; Sharada and I went on a cruise on the Dnieper; and Nahn and Kudu went to see an army competition between the Swedes and the Russians.

Sharada and I enjoyed our cruise on the Dnieper alongside the city of Kiev, which extends for 25 kilometres. The churches and monasteries, built in various styles on the hillock overlooking the river, presented a beautiful view, marred only by a solitary chimney emitting smoke, like an uncouth individual belching at an elegant dinner party. From our boat we saw a tail column which, we were told, marked the spot where the first conversion to Christianity took place. Thereafter there were mass conversions and mass baptisms in the Dnieper. I thought of Feng Yu-hsing in China, 'the Christian General' who, having on river close by, turned a fire hose on his regiment and told the men:

'Soldiers! You have been baptised!'

Kiev is noted for its architectural monuments. To look for them, however, is a tantalizing business. The earliest of these monuments, the Uspenski Sobor, founded by Vladimir, was wrecked by the Tartars in 1240; and the Germans did to the reconstructed church what the Tartars did to the original. A visit to St Sophia's Cathedral, founded by Vladimir's son Yaroslav the Wise, was more satisfying. However, the Cathedral which we saw, with its twenty-one domes built in the style of the Polish-Ukrainian baroque, and its thirteen cupolas signifying Christ and his twelve apostles, was very different from the original, of which a model is kept in the church. Many frescoes in the old church have been restored. Among them are the figures of Yaroslav and his daughters. Yaroslav the Wise, like Akbar the Great, extended his influence by a series of matrimonial alliances. He himself married a sister of the Polish king; and his daughters were married into the royal houses of France, Greece and Hungary. Thus in those days Russia did indeed belong to Europe; and there was no need for a European Defence Community!

The most sublime or, if you are of a secular bent of mind, the most gruesome sight of all was the Monastery of the Caves, founded by Abbot Theodosias in 1073. Here, in the caves dug out of the clay banks along the Dnieper, lived the first group of Russian monks who hoped to obtain salvation by the mortification of the flesh. With candles in our hands, we groped our way through the dark and narrow passages of a subterranean labyrinth, in every corner of which there lay the body of a monk. These bodies, numbering about a hundred, have lain there for 900 years. The faithful would doubtless regard this as a nuracle and the seeptical would attribute it to some peculiar quality in the

clay of the banks of the Dnieper.

MOLDAVIA

A two-hour flight from Kiev brought us and our singers and dancers to Kishinev, capital of Moldavia. No Indian had set his foot here before, nor, so far as we know, any foreigner. We had a great welcome, and it seemed the whole city had turned out to greet us. The road to our hotel was lined by crowds with flowers in their hands; and even after we entered our hotel they waited in the courtyard, longing to get another glimpse of these rare visitors to their city. Analyse and I went out and waved from our bileony, rousing a tumultuous cheer. I felt like Shahjahan giving darshan to his people from a baleony in the Red Fort in Agra. Analyse said that she, too, felt a little like Mumtaz Mahal. I warned nor that I would not be able to build a Taj Mahal for her; and therefore there would be no point in her passing away before me.

Yesterday we went for a drive to the Soviet-Rumanian border. Moldavia was very different from any other Recublic we had so far visited. Here were no woods or forests as in North Russia nor any steppes as in the South. The landscape consisted of a jumble of gently unduluting hids and valleys. Corn was the principal grop. The most characteristic cultivation, however, was the vine; this is the Republic products a third of all the wine in the Soviet Union. Orchaeds were plentiful, and the plants, peaches and apples were the most delicious we had ever tasted.

We also visited a collective farm, named effect the great Russian scientist, Michaela. It was some 70 m a reson extent and worked by 2600 labourers. After the prevous contribution, the air was cripp and clear and we had to ped to wilk among the vines and other front trees in the earden. However, the manager of the torm, who was a born contor, preferred to take us to his office and proposed a number of toric in our honour and treated us to an amageur entertainment in which the workers, with their coloridal costupes, sing.

danced and recited poems, including one from Tagore. Evidently, the manager wanted to show us that the promotion of culture in his collective farm went hand in hand with the

development of agriculture.

Kishinev is situated on a plateau among the picturesque Kodri hills. Like almost all the towns we passed through during this tour, Kishinev was badly damaged and almost destroyed during the war. The proposed reconstruction here has not been as spectacular as in Kiev, Kharkov and Kursk, probably because Moldavia is essentially agrarian and the vast majority of the people live in the villages. The few Russians there live mostly in the cities. Before the war Jews accounted for 10 per cent of the population. On our way to the Michurin collective farm we saw a Jewish cemetery, but not many occupants come to it nowadays because the number of Jews has been drastically reduced by Hitler's policy of extermination. We heard an interesting story about Jews in the Soviet Union. The Head of the Orthodox Church offered a high place in the church to a rich Jew if he would adopt Christianity. He was prepared to make him a Bishop, but the Jew refused. He then offered him the post of Archbishop. Even that did not appeal to the Jew. 'What,' he asked the Jew in exasperation, 'Do you want to be God?' 'One of us,' replied the Jew, 'succeeded in becoming even that!

Not only the Jews but the Moldavians in general have suffered from the vicissitudes of history. They speak a Rumanian dialect and were incorporated in Rumania at the end of the First World War. Bessarabia, which forms the bulk of Moldavia, has changed hands many times during the last 200 years. It was annexed by Russia in 1811 after the brilliant campaign of Kutuzov against Turkey during the Napoleonic Wars, but a portion of it had to be ceded to Turkey at the Conference of Paris in 1856. It was reannexed by Russia by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878 but was included in Rumania at the end of the First World War. The Soviet Union, however, set up an autonomous Moldavian

Republic as an expression of their title to Bessarabia. At the beginning of the Second World War Rumania ceded Bessarabia to the Soviet Union and the Moldavian Republic was set up. Since then it has seen great social and economic changes, but Moldavia still differs from other Soviet Republics in the nature of its economy. Little attempt has been made to establish heavy industry. No factories mar the landscape: no chimneys foul the air. The Moldavians are a happy lot, tending the vine, making wine and canning fruit and vegetables. At a farewell banquet given by the Minister of Culture in honour of our delegation of singers and dancers, I was happy to propose a toast: 'To Moldavia, the land of sunshine, the land of wine, woman and song—good wine, comely women and lovely songs.'

ODESSA

From Kishinev we flew to Odessa. There we were met by the mayor who drove us round and showed us the progress Odessa had made in his time—the new projects launched, the new sanatoria built, the new avenues planted and the roads newly tarred. He was so full of energy that he was nicknamed 'Davai, Davai'. He would suddenly appear among the workmen and shout 'Davai, Davai' (Come on, Come on); and seeing him at a distance, the workmen would nudge each other and say, 'There comes Davai, Davai.'

We spent three days in Odessa. Situated on the warm and unfreezing Black Sea, between the Dnieper and the Dniester rivers, and descending by a series of staircases into the Bay. Odessa was indeed a picturesque city.

In front of the hotel in which I was accommodated stands, in a Roman toga, the statue of the Duke of Richelieu to whom Odessa owes much of its early splendour. An exile from the French Revolution, he spent fourteen years at the beginning of the nineteenth century as the Governor

of Odessa and was greatly loved by the people. With the restoration of the monarchy in France, the Duke returned to Paris to become Prime Minister.

Not far from his statue stands the bust of Pushkin, with the simple inscription: 'To Pushkin, citizen of Odessa.' In reality he was an exile in Odessa for a year, having been banished from St Petersburg for some of his subversive poems. Here he wrote several famous poems, including a portion of Evgeny Onegin. Here also he fell in love with Countess Vorontsova, wife of his own chief, the Governor-General of Odessa. The Count was too much of a gentle man to take notice of the attentions which a petty poetaster-paid to his wife, but he conveniently intercepted one of his letters in which there were some sentiments favouring atheism, and had him banished to Kishinev with instructions to report on a threatened invasion of locusts in Moldavia. Pushkin's report ran as follows:

The locusts flew on and flew on, then alighted
To stay.
They sat and they sat and ate everything up, then
Flew far away.

Next to Pushkin's statue stands a gun, a relic of the Crimean War. It was captured from the Tiger, one of the English ships which bombarded Odessa and was sunk. Our guide told us proudly that the gun showed the fate which would overtake any enemy who attempted to assault their city

again.

The entire coast of the Bay of Odessa was dotted with villas and mansions in which the aristocrats of the nineteenth century lived in pomp and luxury. These villas have now been turned into sanatoria and rest-homes. There are 72 already; and 8 more have been provided for in the next Five Year Plan. The elegant house of Count Dimitri Tolstoy, which contained a fine picture gallery and in which the Rumanian General Alexander lived during the Second World War, is now a scientists' club. The mansion where the weal-

thy Olga Narishkin used to give gay parties is now a sailors' club. The old and magnificent Merchants' Guild is now a Conservatory of Music. The most magnificent of all the buildings, the Vorontsov Palace, built by the French architect, Buffon, in the Russian classical style, is now a Palace of Pioneers. How Pushkin must have stood there among a horde of minor officials and watched,

Hopeless and tongue-tied, With pangs, the icalous and the timid know,

as Countess Vorontsova, his Titania, came down the steps

in regal dignity.

The two institutions of which Odessa is justly proud are the Opera House and the Filatov Institute. The Odessians claim that their opera house is the finest in Europe, comparable to the one in Vienna, and designed by Viennese architects. Swan Lake was on but neither the White nor the Black Swan came anywhere near Plisetskaya's inimitable standards. However, Tchaikovsky's music was there; and I was interested to learn that Tchaikovsky himself conducted the orchestra in this theatre at the first presentation of Swan Lake.

I spent a morning in the Filatov Institute, known after Dr Filatov, who has perfected the art of curing certain eye diseases by grafting eyes taken from corpses. I asked the directress whether they experienced much difficulty in getting a sufficient number of eyes. She said there was no difficulty at all, as people had no feeling against the extraction of eyes from dead bodies, for a public purpose. I was told about a woman who had lost her child and later came to know that its eyes had been taken out and grafted on someone else. She went to the Institute and inquired how the patient was progressing. On hearing that he was well, she said that she felt that a part of her child was still alive.

In Odessa I met a Tartar waiter, Zikriya Ibrahimovich. Seventy years of age, he had been a waiter for 55 years. He recalled how his mother used to read the Koran to him and

impress on him that alcohol was haram—an injunction which he has not disobeyed. Though he spent his most impressionable years in the time of the Tsars, he was fair to the present regime. In Tsarist times, he said, a Tartar could be a waiter and no more; now there were Tartar doctors, Tartar engineers and Tartar administrators.

THE FOUNTAIN OF BAKHCHISARAI

During this trip one of my minor ambitions was fulfilled. We visited Bakhchisarai. Ever since we saw the Fountain of Bakhchisarai in the Bolshoi theatre I had been wanting to see the original fountain which, I had heard, still existed in the heart of the Crimea.

We flew to Simferopol from Odessa. We were received at the airfield by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the City Soviet. They waved aside the Intourist representative, who had also come with a car to take us to Yalta, and took us in their own luxurious car to the city, gave us a superb breakfast-cum-lunch and then drove us to Bakhchisarai and on to Yalta.

At Bakhchisarai we went straight to the museum. The directress explained to us how one civilization after another had ebbed and flowed in this region. All this civilization was wiped away by the invasion of the Tartars in the thirteenth century. Riding without saddle, living on mare's milk and dried meat and, when necessary, drawing blood from the veins of their horses, these men spread death and desolation from the Crimea in the south to Novgorod in the north throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the end of the fifteenth century their power had declined; and one Azi Girei founded a separate Tartar dynasty owing nominal allegiance to Turkey. This dynasty ruled over the Crimea for three centuries, until it was absorbed by Russia

at the end of the eighteenth century in the reign of Catherine the Great.

From the museum we proceeded to the palace of the Khans of the Crimea. It consisted of a number of courtvards, with pleasant gardens and villas, some of which had Arabic inscriptions and mosaic work executed by Italian craftsmen. We saw a room where cases used to be tried; another, where Ambassadors used to be received. There were mosques and towers and decorated cages for birds. Cages also, our guide said, for the women of the Khan's harem, who were treated no better than birds. We saw four separate houses enclosed by high walls for the Khan's four lawful wives. We saw the jewellery they used to wear, the carpets and cushions on which they used to recline, the silver dishes from which they ate, the pencils with which they painted their eyebrows, the water-jug containing holy water from Mecca and another jug, containing rose-water, with which the Khan gargled after his meals. One room was designated the Khan's resting room in the summer; another was called his resting room in the winter, but, said the directress of the museum, there was no room which was earmarked as his office. The Khan. she said, had only three occupations in life; to eat halva, to caress women and to listen to the flattery of the servants and sycophants who surrounded him.

Yet the Khans must have had more in them, or their dynasty would not have survived for three hundred years. Even Russia sometimes reeled under the blows of the Khanate of the Crimea and, at other times, sought the help of the Khans in her campaigns against her enemies. We saw a picture in which, after the Russian army had been defeated in 1660 by the Tartars and the Poles not far from Moscow, General Sheremetev was carried off as a prisoner to the Crimea, where he remained for 21 years. Another harrowing picture, executed by the great Russian painter Levin, showed the Chief of the Ukraine, Bogdan Himelnitsky, leaving his son with the Tartars as hostage for the huge sum which he offered to pay in return for their help against the Poles.

Pushkin, who visited Bakhchisarai from his exile in Odessa, had a true appreciation of the strength as well as the weaknesses of the Tartar Khans. He has brought out their character in his poem 'The Fountain of Bakhchisarai', which has become a favourite ballet at the Bolshoi. The story is simple. Khan Girei attacks a Polish castle and, in a splendid hand-to-hand fight, kills the son of the Polish chief and takes Maria, his fiancee, prisoner. On seeing her, he meets a force stronger than any he had yet encountered. For the first time he is in love. He takes Maria to his palace in Bakhchisarai. Maria resists his entreaties and is killed in a fit of jealousy and anger by Zarema, the star of the Khan's harem. The Khan sentences Zarema to a horrible end and builds a fountain at Bakhchisarai as a memorial of his unquenchable grief over the death of Maria.

Sitting on the steps in front of the Fountain, as Pushkin had done, we listened to the story of its construction. The girl in whose memory the Fountain of Bakhchisarai was constructed, and whose death left the Khan inconsolable, was one Dil Rabikesh. Baron de Tott, a French soldier who helped the Khan to reorganize his army, has left an interesting conversation on record. He asked the Khan how old Dil Rabikesh was when she died. 'She had seen but fourteen springs,' the Khan replied. The Baron asked how was it that the Khan was so much in love with such a young girl. 'Because,' replied the Khan, 'she was wise as a serpent, brave as a lioness, strong as an eagle, tender as a child, fond as a mother, kind as a sister and passionate as a lover.'

The Fountain was constructed in 1764 by an Iranian architect, Omar, in response to the Khan's injunction that he should build a memorial the stones of which would weep his sorrow through the ages. The stones do indeed weep, for drop by drop water drips gently from the many crevices in this marble fountain. If the Taj Mahal is a symbol of love, the Fountain of Bakhchisarai is a symbol of grief, inextinguishable and almost invisible. Thus, said Pushkin when he

visited this fountain, does a mother weep who has lost her son in battle.

YALTA

Our drive from Bakhchisarai to Yalta was unique-for the Soviet Union. After the flat plains of Russia and the vast steppes of the Ukraine, it was a relief to see the mountains. Soon after we left Bakhchisarai, the hills started getting bigger and bigger and seemed to come closer and closer to us until they almost hemmed us in; and our car wound its way through them in a series of hairpin bends. Our driver exclaimed: 'This is not a road, it is a staircase!' After two hours' dangerous driving, made the more dangerous by rain, we reached the top of a plateau where there was a group of strangely shaped rocks called Aipetri (St Peter). Here there were no trees, and not even a blade of grass. It was a blasted heath, fit not so much for St Peter as for the Weird Sisters of Macheth. A howling wind was blowing: and nearly blew us off our feet when we got out of the car to shake hands with the President of the City Soviet who had come to greet us.

It was from this desolate spot that we obtained our first view of Yalta, far, far below on the sea coast. There, there was no wind or rain and the Black Sea looked like a sunlit lake. Oblivious of the commotion of the elements above it Yalta slept peacefully, like a child by the agitated bosom of its mother in an air-raid shelter.

In Yalta we met the oldest person we have come across. Maria Paylovna, Chekhov's sister, aged 93. Our first visit in Yalta was to Chekhov's house. We saw the study in which he wrote *The Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard*, the dining room with the same embroidered table cloth that Chekhov had used, the piano on which Chaliapin had played, the gun with which Chekhov used to go shooting and, so

his sister said, brought back nothing, and the two small ebony elephants Chekhov had brought from Ceylon on his way back from Sakhalin. More interesting than all these

inanimate objects was his nonagenarian sister.

It is a rare privilege for a visitor to be taken to see Maria Paylovna. We expected to see a wizened, bespectacled old woman. What was our surprise when we saw a young old lady, looking no older than my mother did when she died - she was 78 and reading without the aid of spectacles! Her sister-in-law, she said slightly patronizingly, suffered from eye trouble though she was only 86. She was referring to Olga Knipper, the young and gifted actress whom Chekhov married in 1901 and whose married life lasted only three years, for Chekhov died at the early age of 44 in 1904. Maria Pavlovna was wrapped up in her brother. She was the only sister among her five brothers and was somewhat spoiled by them. She was specially attached to Chekhov, who used to order her about, 'as if he was my Commander'. With a charming gesture, she showed how she used to sit 'like this, taut and nervous', on the first nights of her brother's plays. In 1898 he bought a piece of land in Yalta and she and he together built the house in which she lived for six years with him and has gone on living for 52 years with his memory. She pointed with tears in her eyes to the tall cypress tree which she had planted in the year of his death. And I noticed that her eves went involuntarily to the icon of the Dark Virgin and Child which stood before her.

In the mind of my generation, Yalta will always be associated with the Conference which was held here towards the end of the war, between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. It was here that Russia agreed to join the war against Japan. It was also here that the United Nations was conceived. I, who assisted at its birth in San Francisco, a few months later, am often surprised at the shape it is assuming, so different from what we had hoped.

We saw the glittering room in Livadia Palace in which the Yalta Conference was held. This palace used to be the residence of the Tsar but was converted into a sanatorium soon after the Revolution. Some 10,000 workmen enjoy rest and recuperation here every year, each for four weeks. We were taken to the Tsar's bedroom, overlooking the sea, and saw a dozen women hurriedly getting out of their beds, where they had been having their afternoon rest, and tidying their hair. We also saw the Tsarina's bedroom. It is smaller, but overlooks the mountains as well as the sea.

THE ROAD TO MOSCOW

On the evening of 15 September, 1956, Ratnam, my Counsellor, rang me up from Moscow and told me of the grave developments over the Suez Canal. We, therefore, decided to rush back to Moscow.

We left Yalta on 16 September. Instead of the rugged road through Bakhchisarai, we took the easier coastal road to Alushta and thence to Simferopol,

We now entered the southern steppe. In its vast and limitless grandeur it resembled a desert, except that it was covered with grass instead of with sand. It made good pasture land, and we saw more flocks of cattle here than anywhere else in the Soviet Union.

We spent the night in Zaporozhe in a comfortable dacha which had been placed at our disposal by the mayor, and saw the Dnieper Dam the next morning. From the hydroelectric station we saw an island, 12 miles long. It was here that the Zaporozhe Cossacks, famous in Russian history for their daring deeds, lived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The site on which the plant is built was called in the old days the Nest of Love, because women had to say good-bye to their men-folk there; they were not allowed to step on to that he-man island. Not far from Zaporozhe is an oak, 600 years old, under which the Cossacks met and got a professional letter-writer to draft a reply full of the

vilest invectives to the Sultan of Turkey, who had sent them an ultimatum — an incident brilliantly depicted in a famous painting of Repin, of which copies can be seen everywhere in the Soviet Union.

Before the Revolution, Zaporozhe was a little town of 30,000 people who brewed beer and grew maize. It is now a city of 430,000 people. It was the scene of bitter fighting during the war and was practically razed to the ground. A new city with wide roads, spacious parks and public buildings

is now rising from the ashes of the old.

We left Zaporozhe at 2.30 and covered the 280 kilometres to Kharkov in about four hours. We were still in the region of the steppe, but its nature had changed. It was no longer absolutely flat and treeless; there were undulating hills and picturesque little clumps of trees. Moreover, there was far more cultivation than in the southern steppe. Winter wheat, a few weeks old, formed a green carpet for the earth where, in past centuries, there was nothing but grass, on which Tartar horses grazed and the Golden Horde galloped northwards to wrestle with the kingdoms of Kiev, Novgorod and Moscow — and to overthrow them for three centuries.

We set out from Kharkov on the afternoon of the 18th, after spending the morning in a tractor factory. It had been raining and the roads were skiddy, so we took six hours to cover the 380 kilometres from Kharkov to Orel. By the time we reached Orel the weather had cleared. We saw the sun setting with bloodshot eyes, as if in a tempestuous fury, and a pale full moon watching this spectacle like a woman who had suffered long from her husband's domination and was not unwilling to let him go.

We spent the night in Orel and left for Moscow on the 19th at 10. It was a perfect autumn day, cold and bracing and sunny. In the woods near Yasnaya Polyana, tipped and in places suffused with gold, we had lunch. There we came across an example of masculine aggression. A number of fowls came out from a neighbouring hut to greet us, clucking and shaking their heads; and I threw a tomato to them.

Three hens started sharing this tomato and were happily enjoying it when a cock came defiantly, seized the tomato from off their beaks and strutted away; and the hens looked on, dazed and helpless. I thought to myself that in the world of fowls, too, the prevailing law is:

The good old rule . . . the simple plan, That they should take, who have the power, And they should keep who can.

And the latest events in the Suez Canal zone seemed to confirm that the good old rule was still in operation.

7 DOWN THE VOLGA

A TARTAR REPUBLIC

On a lovely midsummer day in 1957, we left Gorki, formerly Nizhni Novgorod, for Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea, 2200 kilometres away. My cabin was on the starboard side of the ship. I was glad of this, because the right bank of the Volga was far more interesting than the left. To the left was a vast level plain, monotonous and liable to inundation. The right bank was high and hilly, covered with pine and fir, lime and oak. The Volga seemed like a man who had to steer his course between two women: one, meek and mild, flatchested and flat-tempered, allowing herself to be overrun by her lord and master at his sweet will and pleasure; and the other, haughty and high-spirited, now smilingly approaching him, now sullenly receding from him. But a Russian would not appreciate this simile. To him the Volga is never masculine. She is always a woman, Matushka Volga, Little Mother Volga.

In the morning we woke up to find our boat pulling up at Cheboksari. It is the capital of the Chuvash Autonomous Republic. We passed through or near three other Autonomous Republics, the Marri, the Mordvinian and the Tartar. These Autonomous Republics are the relics of the days when different tribes roamed about on the banks of the Volga, contending with one another and giving pin-pricks—and sometimes more than pin-pricks—to the Kingdoms of Vladimir and Muscovy.

Of them none was more formidable than the Tartars. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the Tartars carried out raids into the Kingdom of Muscovy, 'cutting the Christians down like grass'; and in 1382, they even captured the city of Moscow. In the fifteenth century, after the power of the Golden Horde had declined, a Tartar dynasty independent of the Horde established a Khanate in the Central Volga region with Kazan as its capital. It was not till the middle of the sixteenth century that the Khanate of Kazan was over-

thrown by Ivan the Terrible.

While approaching Kazan, we saw an island near the confluence of the Sviyaga river with the Volga. Here Ivan had assembled his army and consolidated his position before launching his final attack on Kazan in 1552. After the capture of Kazan, the Russian army swept down the river-bank and captured Astrakhan. Thus at last the Volga became a Russian river from its source in Lake Seligir to its fall in the Caspian Sea. This important trade route from the north to the south was held by a series of frontier posts, all of which we saw during this trip—Nizhni Novgorod (now Gorki), Kazan, Samara (now called Kuibyshev), Saratov, Tsaritsyn, (now called Stalingrad), and Astrakhan.

We arrived at Kazan at 2 p.m. and were unexpectedly met by a delegation, including the President and the Vice-President of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazan ASSR, the Secretary of the Communist Party and others. The President was a Tartar woman. In meeting her, I did not feel that I had caught, or was caught by, a Tartar; she looked so soft and gentle. That Tartar women, who had been so backward before the Revolution, could now hold such important posts showed the extent of the progress which the Tartars had made. Our hosts took us to a flower-decorated room in the river port and treated us to an excellent lunch, with many toasts and much cognac. This was my second visit to Kazan. The first was two years previously when Prime Minister Nehru had halted here for an hour. I inquired about a Tartar girl who had then regaled us with Tartar songs. My hosts teased me by saying that evidently I remembered her not because of her good songs but becare of her good looks! Which indeed was true, for it was her sweet face rather than her sweet voice which had remained in my memory.

Soon after lunch my hosts drove me through a street. formerly called Prolomnaya ('Break-through Street'), through which Ivan the Terrible broke into Kazan in 1552 and captured it. This vivid name, alas, has now been changed to Bauman Street. We then drove up to the Kremlin, which was erected by Khan Ulu Mohamet in the middle of the fifteenth century. Inside the palisades we saw a relic of Tartar architecture, the Suyumbeke Tower, rising by seven stages to a height of 250 feet. A Tartar girl who accompanied us related how a Tartar princess had hurled herself from the top of the tower in 1552 in despair at the ruin of her native city. Valia, our Russian interpreter, hastily added that this was only a legend. We also saw in the distance a truncated pyramid, erected in 1823 as a memorial to the capture of Kazan. With even greater interest, we saw the Kazan University which was founded in 1804 and included among its alumni such distinguished names as Lenin, Leo Tolstoy, Aksakov and Lobachevsky, 'the Russian Copernicus'. In front of the University stands a youthful statue of Lenin as an undergraduate.

Our hosts explained to me the progress which Kazan had made since the Revolution. Among its manufactures are locomotives, railway cars, aircraft and agricultural implements. It has now assumed a new importance, for petroleum has been found here and Kazan promises to be a second Baku.

Until now my acquaintance with Kazan was confined to Gorki's vivid description of it as it was at the end of the last century, in his book My Universities. How different was it then! The Kazanka, on which Kazan stands, was then a little rivulet; now it is a 'sea' thanks to the Kuibyshev Dam which has raised the water level by 25 metres. It was on the banks of this little river that Gorki once sat, flinging pebbles into the dark water all night long and, in his despair at the state of affairs in Russia, saying to himself again and again: 'What shall I do?' It was not far from here that he put a

bullet into his chest, hoping to reach the heart but succeeding only in reaching the lungs. Well might Gorki have despaired of the future of Russia, for among the tramps, thieves and stevedores of the Volga wharves, where he himself pulled barges up and down the river, he found himself in 'a whirling world where men's instincts were coarse and their greed was naked and unashamed'. The students too led a wild, Bohemian life. For one rouble, they could have a woman for a whole night in the brothels of Kazan. Even in Church boys and girls were in the habit of holding hands, so much so that a parson once rebuked them, saying: 'Beasts! Can you find no other place for your obscenity?' And yet there was no lack of intellectual interests among them. Gorki found many types of undergraduates—a Normal school student who wrote five volumes of short stories, sought equilibrium of body and mind by joining the joiner's trade and, not finding it, committed suicide; another who felt that life without synthesis was impossible and tried to reconcile Marx with Nietzche; a Tolstoyan who had a burning faith in the salvation of the world by the power of love and who, in pure compassion, was prepared to rend his fellow men to pieces; believers in God who clinched their arguments by asking, 'Do you want to believe in Christ or in Darwin?'; disbelievers who denied that man was made in God's image or that there was a God at all, for 'either God does not know how hard life is treating us, or he knows and is helpless, or he can help and does not care'; budding revolutionaries plotting against the Isar; and counter-revolutionaries, reciting with approval the words of Ibsen:

The only Revolution that I recall
That was not altogether a cheat and a fraud.
One that out-gloried all its successors.
That, of course, was the Great Deluge
But I unifer was cheated even then.
For Noah, on the ark, became a dictator!

In retrospect, the intellectual ferment of Gorki's time strikes us as at once preposterous and pathetic. Not dilettante speculations, such as those in which the students and intellectuals indulged, would lead to Russia's salvation, said Gorki, but only concentrated thought and hard work. Gorki looked forward to the day when all Russians would be seized by that 'intoxicating zest for work, than which only a woman's embrace can be more sweet'.

THE BOW OF SAMARA

From the Captain downwards, everyone was determined to see that we enjoyed this trip. The Captain was nicknamed 'the Millionaire'. A photograph of his recently appeared in the Soviet papers under this designation, for he had completed a million hours on the Volga. His house was in Nizhni Novgorod, famous for its sailors from time immemorial.

When I told Mrs Bischoff, the wife of the Austrian Ambassador, that I was going to sail down the Volga, she advised me to take a kettle and a packet of tea with me. She had done this trip five years previously and found that the ship's restaurant did not open till noon. Those were Stalin's days when even Government offices began working at noon and went on working till the small hours of the morning. Now the office hours have been changed—they are from 9 to 6 and the ship's restaurant opened at 8. The meals were excellent and overwhelming. Usually I order porridge and an omelette for breakfast. The porridge which was produced would have lasted me for a whole week in Moscow and the omelette was the largest I had ever eaten. No wonder the Russians are so portly! An Englishman told me that he asked a Russian why Russian women allowed themselves to put on so much weight. 'Because,' the Russian replied, 'we want our women to be women and not hollyhocks.'

We left Kazan at about 3 p.m. In the evening, we reached a spot where the Kama joined the Volga river. There is a town called 'The Mouth of the Kama', Kamskoe Usto, but we could not see the mouth at all. The fact is that the 'sea' of Kuibyshev extends right up to and beyond this spot and is 40 kilometres wide at the confluence of the two rivers, the Kama and the Volga.

A few hours later, our boat made a stop at Ulyanovsk, formerly Simbirsk, but renamed after Lenin, whose real name was Ulyanov. I would have liked to see the house where he was born but I could not do so as it was 3 a.m.

when the boat stopped.

In the morning we rose into a scene of great beauty. The Novodevichi (New Maiden) hills came into view, to be followed soon by the more famous Zhiguli Hills. With their dense forests, sharp escarpments and deep ravines, formerly infested by the Volga robbers, these hills did indeed look picturesque. They were only 1200 feet high but somehow looked considerably higher. They completely dominated Little Mother Volga and even compelled her to change her course. She had so far been flowing freely in a southerly direction. At Stavropol, the Zhiguli hills compelled her to describe a sharp hairpin curve to the west and, at Kuibyshev, back to the east. This is how the Bow of Samara has been formed; and it was the most beautiful part of the river, to see which alone the trip would have been worth while. It is here that the Kuibyshev Dam has been built, and it is here that the Samara river enters the Volga, quietly and proudly, like a peasant girl who is summoned to the bed of her feudal lord

THE UTOPIA OF ELECTRICIANS

During this trip I felt again and again that I was travelling on a lagoon and not on a river. Parts of the Volga reminded me of the lovely lagoons of Travancore on which I used to sail in my childhood. But while the lagoons of Travancore are formed by the intrusion of the sea, the lagoons here are formed by the transformation of the river into a 'sea', or rather a series of 'seas', the Moscow Sea, the Gorki Sea,

the Kuibyshev Sea, the Stalingrad Sea, and so on.

For two days we sailed through the Kuibyshev Sea. It stretches for 800 kilometres along the Volga and 500 kilometres up the Kama and is 15,000 square kilometres in extent. At Kazan it is 11 kilometres wide and at Ulyanovsk 20 kilometres. While approaching Stavropol we saw how this reservoir had been formed. We saw a dam 5 kilometres long and 40 metres high, with a spillway, 1.5 kilometres long and 35 metres high, and two locks for the passage of ships. It has raised the water level of the Volga by 25 metres.

Not far from Stalingrad we saw another dam under construction. This is to be as long as the Kuibyshev dam and 8 metres higher and will raise the level of the Volga by 26

metres.

The Kuibyshev and Stalingrad dams are part of the Great Volga Scheme which was formulated in 1930. Other projects which form part of this scheme are the Gorki Project, which has raised the level of the river by 26 metres, and the Cheboksary and the Saratov Projects which have been included in

the present Five Year Plan.

The objects of the Great Volga Scheme are to create a deep-water route fit for sea-going vessels along the entire course of the river, to irrigate areas ridden by drought, and to generate electricity. The total capacity of the Volga Cascade is to be 12 million kilowatts. The Gorki Hydro-electric Station has a capacity of 500,000 kilowatts. This is comparatively small, and yet it is producing more current than all the power stations in Russia put together produced before the Revolution. The Cheboksary and Saratov stations, which were to be completed by 1960, will have a capacity of 800,000 and one million kilowatts respectively. The capacity of the Kuibyshev Plant is 2·1 million kilowatts and of the Stalingrad Plant 2·3 million. Even these will be eclipsed by the proposed power stations in Siberia—the Bratskaya on the Angara and the Krasnodarskaya on the

Yenisei, each of which will have a capacity of 3.2 million kilowatts.

The rate at which electricity has been, and is being, developed in the Soviet Union is baffling to the imagination. In 1920, the output of electricity in the Soviet Union was half a billion kilowatt hours. By 1940, it had risen to 48 billion; by 1955, to 166 billion; and the target for 1960 was 365 billion kilowatt hours. In one day, the Soviet Union now generated as much electricity as was produced in the whole year 1920. In less than four decades the USSR had advanced from the fifteenth to the second place in the world in the production of electricity.

Lenin once defined communism as 'socialism plus electrification'. After an interview with Lenin, H. G. Wells wrote as follows in his book, Russia in the Shadows, regarding Lenin's grandiose ideas for the electrification of Russia: 'Lenin who, like a good orthodox Marxist, denounces all "Utopias", has succumbed at last to a Utopia, the Utopia of electricians. . . Can one imagine a more courageous project in a vast, flat land of forests and illiterate peasants, with no water power, with no technical skill available, and with trade and industry at the last gasp? . . . One can imagine such projects as successful in highly-developed industrial countries. But their application to Russia is an altogether greater strain upon the constructive imagination. I cannot see anything of the sort happening in this dark crystal of Russia, but this little man at the Kremlin can.

The dream of 'the little man at the Kremhn' has been fulfilled and overfulfilled.

THE STEPPE

Towards the end of our journey we entered the region of the steppe. For twenty-four hours the hills had been getting

smaller and smaller and the trees more and more scarce. And then there stretched as far as the eye could see a vast expanse of light-brown soil on which nothing grew but bushes. And for miles together even bushes were absent. I had prepared myself for this scenery by reading Chekhov's story, 'The Steppe'. Even that poem in prose did not reconcile me to the infinite inhospitality of this region.

Climatically we seemed to have passed suddenly from the temperate to the torrid zone. Indeed, during the first two days of our voyage, when there was no sun and the sky was overcast, the cold was intemperate. But after the Bow of Samara the whole aspect changed. Saratov was warm; Stalingrad was hot; and Astrakhan was said to be blazing in the sun. The parched steppe seemed to be waiting for rain like a spinster with a dried-up heart who waits eternally for love. Now and then the steppe looked at a few fleeting clouds; they passed and it relapsed into its everlasting sterility.

After Volsk, we passed through a number of towns which used to bear German and Swiss names-Basel, Marxstadt, Schaffhausen, Glarus, Lucerne, Susental and Katherinenstadt, which was founded by a Dutch baron, Beauregard. Those names are no longer in use: the only two which have survived are those which bear the honoured names of Marx and Engels. The towns are still however reminiscent of the former German colonies which Catherine the Great established in this region in the second half of the eighteenth century. Evidently she thought that the laborious German genius might turn even this arid region to the service of man. She gave the Germans special privileges and organized a separate Ministry, called the Guardian Office, to look after their interests. In 1914 there was a solid block of 400,000 German settlers here. During the First World War they came under a cloud, but soon after the war the communists in their enthusiasm for establishing a multinational State. established a separate autonomous Volga-German Republic. In the Second World War the lovalty of the Germans to the

Soviet Government again came under suspicion. They were therefore uprooted and expelled to the east and the Volg.-German Autonomous Republic was abrogated on the eve of the great battle of Stalingrad. There is however a distinct German strain in the inhabitants of these parts. One day when we were at lunch, a strapping girl with the bluest of blue eyes walked into the restaurant, distracting our attention even from the delicious strawberries we had been enjoying.

Our boat sailed fast, disdainful of even such towns as Marx and Engels. She, however, stopped for two hours at Saratov, which was founded in the second half of the sixteenth century. It is now an important railway junction, with a 400-kilometre line running to Uralsk in the east and a 600-kilometre line to Astrakhan in the south. Formerly a backward agricultural region, it has become a flourishing industrial centre producing tractors, automobiles, ball-bearings and harvester-combines. We drove round the town and found a street, a square, a statue, a museum and a university, all bearing the name of Chernishevsky, a radical leader of the nineteenth century whom the Tsar had put in prison for 27 years and released just in time for him to lay his bones in his native town. The only older object was a pink and green Trinity cathedral, built in baroque style.

Stalingrad was the next town at which our boat condescended to stop. The heat was intense and a scorching wind was blowing. I had been to Stalingrad three times and was inclined to stay put in my cabin but decided to go out for an hour for the sake of Valia who had never been there before. The city had grown since my last visit; it was also looking greener. More trees had been planted and more lawns laid out. Even the Mamai Hill was beginning to recover from the scars of war, and a new war memorial had been erected. Only the house which Pavlov defended to the death for 40 days had been left intact as a reminder of one of the thousand acts of heroism by which Stalingrad saved the Soviet Union.

An hour after we left Stalingrad we passed a gigantic statue of Stalin at the entrance to the Volga-Don Canal.

At the very moment when we were passing this statue, and I was thinking of the caprice of Fate, of the vicissitudes of history, of the destruction, last autumn, of a similar statue which had stood at the entrance of the Suez Canal and of the destruction of Stalin's own statue in Budapest, the ship's loudspeaker blared out the announcement that the hair-cutting saloon would be open till 6, the restaurant till 11 and the bar till 12!

We then passed through what is known as the Caspian Depression. At Saratov the Volga descended to the level of the sea; now she flowed below sea-level, and at Astrakhan we were 65 feet below the level of the sea. This depression is part of an inland sea which existed millions of years ago, and of which the present Caspian Sea is a relic. This accounts for the crust of salt by which vast stretches of soil are covered. There are sand dunes and salt lakes. There is a total absence of vegetation; and the steppe has become a desert.

The Volga too seems to feel the monotony of it all. has come a long way from her source, Lake Seligar. The longest river in Europe, she has travelled more than 3000 kilometres. Many companions had joined her and lost their identity in her-the Oka, the Kama, the Sura, the Sviyaga and the Samara. She has nourished Kingdoms and Khanates on her banks; they are gone, she remains. Poets have sung her praise, artists have painted her picture and lovers have found comfort in each other on her banks or release from each other in her waters. And now, a new type of man, with monstrous machines, has appeared, trying to order her about, regulate her, control her, make her rise and fall, and go hither and thither in obedience to his will. In the earlier stages of her journey, forests used to flank her, woods waved and smiled to her and hills tried to waylay her and, not succeeding, let her go. The last to take liberties with her was the Zwingli mountain which wrenched her, like some fierce ideology, first to the left and then to the right. At Sizran, she freed herself from the clutches of the Zwingli mountain and resumed her steady southern course. But now she seems rather weary of it all. She has lost something of her former gaiety and ebullience. She has no more companions to play with; the hills and woods have deserted her; she has nothing to rest her eyes on except the dreary steppe. Alone, unfriended and melancholy, the Volga has come to the end of all things, nothing. Just as a man who, having tasted all philosophies and found them all unsatisfying, commends his soul to the Infinite, so also the Volga, serene but resigned, would soon merge her being in the Caspian Sea and find her Nirvana there.

8 SIBERIA

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN ROUTE

IN 1958 we had a race with spring in different parts of the Soviet Union. In April, when Moscow was still in the grip of winter and there was no sign of a thaw, the doctors sent me off to the Crimea after an attack of pneumonia. spring had arrived already; it was beginning to touch the trees and plants into life and leafage. In the beginning of May, we returned to Moscow for a few days in connexion with President Nasser's visit and found that nature was still asleep. We went back to the Crimea, where spring had given way to summer and the roses were in full bloom. In the beginning of June, we returned to Moscow. Moscow too had embraced summer, after no more than a flirtation with spring, only to relapse a few days later into a cold spell when the temperature dropped to zero. From the vagaries of the Moscow weather we escaped to Siberia, where nature was arrayed in all the glory of spring.

On 11 June we flew in a jet plane from Moscow soon after midnight and reached Sverdlovsk in the Urals two hours later. Sverdlovsk used to be called Yekaterinburg; it was here that the last of the Tsars and his family were assassinated. After an hour's halt we flew to Novossibirsk, which we reached five hours after leaving Moscow.

At Novossibirsk, we entered the Moscow-Vladivostok train. It takes 8 days and 8 hours to cover the distance from Moscow to Vladivostok. On our first day in the train we passed through a vast and limitless plain. There were no cuttings or embankments. The train did not seem to be in a hurry; it did not rush through the countryside, as our Grand

Trunk Express or the Deccan Queen does, making the trees fly and the villages disappear like dots. The Trans-Siberian train's motion had something of the quality of the Russian occupation of Siberia which proceeded, for a whole century,

.... with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy.

Russia occupied Tobolsk in 1587, Tomsk in 1604, Chita in 1658 and Kamchatka in 1697.

The whole of our first day in the train was spent in Western Siberia, a vast region of one million square miles lying between the Urals in the west and the Yenisei in the east. Kazakhstan in the south and the Arctic Ocean in the north. Its population is only 10 million or 10 per square mile. A fertile agricultural region, it was a godsend during the war when the other great agricultural region of the USSR, the Ukraine, was occupied by the Germans. Herds of cattle could be seen everywhere; and Western Siberia could be relied on for the supply of meat, milk and butter.

Leaving the Novossibirsk Oblast, we entered the famous Kuznets region which American correspondents have called 'the Soviet Mid-west'. What makes it so rich is the existence of a coal basin, the reserves of which have been estimated at 900 billion tons. Lying near the surface and in thick seams, the coal here is cheaper to extract than the coal of the Donets Basin. In the first Five Year Plan, the Ural-Kuznets combine was formed in order to develop the iron of the Urals with the aid of the coal of the Kuznets; but now with the discovery of iron ore in Western Siberia and of coal in Karaganda each region has become self-sufficient. In the centre of the Kuznets basin is Stalinsk, a town which almost rivals Magnitogorsk in the production of iron and steel. It was about this town that the poet Mayakovsky exclaimed:

In a few years' time
This glade of boggy soil
Will be a garden city.

With open hearths
Of a hundred sun-power
We shall light up Siberia.

We reached Krasnoyarsk on the morning after our departure from Novossibirsk. Here we crossed the Yenisei river just as we had crossed the Ob at Novossibirsk. These two rivers, together with the Lena, constitute a colossal system of water transport, supplementing the Trans-Siberian railroad which serves only the extreme south of Siberia.

We now entered Eastern Siberia, which stretches from the Arctic Ocean in the north to China and Mongolia in the south, from the Yenisei in the west to the Maritime Province in the east. Eastern Siberia was far more refreshing to the eye than Western. The countryside was no longer monotonously flat. It was a region of hills and plateaus covered with trees. There was a railway station called Taiga, appropriately named because it was surrounded by dense forests known as taiga. We saw a large number of goods trains loaded with timber; and logs of wood heaped in piles could be seen everywhere. Eastern Siberia is the principal supplier of lumber in the USSR. Equally valuable are the furs and gold of l'astern Siberia. We passed a town called Marinsk where gold is produced along the Kiya riverside. The most important gold-producing area, however, is the Yakutsk ASSR, a vast region which is as large as India and yet has a population of only 400,000 against our 400 million.

On the 14th of June, that is, within three days of leaving Moscow, we reached Irkutsk. Before the construction of the Trans-Siberian railway in 1905, this trip would have taken a whole year. This is how Chekhov, who in 1890 undertook a journey to distant Sakhalin, 'The Island of Lost Souls', in order to get over the pangs of his unrequited love for

Lydia Avilov, has described it:

This road is the longest and, it seems, the worst in the entire world. It is hard to travel on it, very hard; but it becomes all the more difficult when you realize that this rutty strip of earth,

this black pock-marked trail, is the only artery linking Europe with Siberia. And along this artery, we are told, civilization flows eastward. Impossible mud, water, boggy ruts, detours, tumble-down bridges, wayside inns with bedbugs and vermin, evil smells and foul language.

We cannot but admire the spirit of adventure which possessed the Russian pioneers who, braving the hardships of this tremendous journey, travelled right across Siberia to Sakhalin, crossed the Bering Strait, named it after one of them, and went to Alaska, which belonged to Russia for 150 years. Russian traders even appeared in California in 1812. Perhaps the Russian River which I saw when I attended the San Francisco Conference in 1945 is now the only reminder of Russian penetration into California at the beginning of the last century.

IRKUTSK AND LAKE BAIKAL

Zhenia, the Head of Intourist, received us at Irkutsk. She was one of those women to whom you felt that you could safely entrust yourself in a foreign land. We told her that while in Irkutsk we would like to see Lake Baikal and the hydro-electric dam on the Angara and that for the rest she could do with us exactly as she liked. She suggested that we might begin with a tour of the city and took us to a twohundred-year-old church on the banks of the Irkut. It was one of the two churches which were functioning out of the eighteen in the time of the Tsars. We thought it strange that a communist guide should have taken us to a church first, but soon knew why she did so. She stopped in front of a grave just outside the church and said that there lay Mme Trubitskaya and her three children, all of whom died in infancy. Trubitski, the husband, was one of the leaders of the Decembrist movement who, together with other patriots like Prince Volkonsky, were exiled to Irkutsk by the Tsar. The wives insisted on accompanying their husbands, despite the terrors of Siberia, and Nekrassov has written a poem in their praise called 'Russian Women'. Irkutsk is one of the oldest towns in Siberia. Among the

Irkutsk is one of the oldest towns in Siberia. Among the monuments which were shown to us there was a statue in honour of Shelikhov, 'the Russian Colombus', who discovered Alaska. This memorial was, built in marble from the Urals. The marble had to be dragged by horses right through Siberia and cost 11,760 roubles, a fantastic sum in those days. While dwelling on the greatness of the explorer of Alaska, our guide also dwelt on the stupidity of the Tsar who sold this rich and strategic region to the United States Government for 7 million dollars in 1867.

Our main purpose in going to Irkutsk was to see Lake Baikal. We left Irkutsk by car on the morning of the 15th at about 9 and as we set out, saw the Irkut river falling into the Angara. Then we saw a brand-new town rising round an aluminium factory. This town was to be called Shelikhov after 'the Russian Colombus'. Then I somehow went to sleep. When I woke up a few minutes later, I thought I was still dreaming, for I was in taiga-land. All around me was the taiga, deep, dark, virginal, mysterious, impenetrable. The taiga seemed to hem us in on all sides. It encroached on the road and threatened our onward passage, for on the horizon were ranges of hills, all covered with taiga. Nowhere, not even in India, have I seen forests of such density and immensity. The forests in my own Travancore or Mysore or the Central Provinces are indeed magnificent, but there would be other things than trees to divert one's attention, such as ferns and shrubs, rivulets and waterfalls. Here there was nothing but trees; they stood so closely together that they blotted out the sun and the sky. The trees were all of one or two kinds-pine and birch, birch and pine and an occasional fir and cedar. Here nature has behaved like an artist who produces an impression by using just one colour, or a conjurer who casts a spell on you by reciting the same mantra over and over again.

Thus flanked by the taiga we drove for a hundred kilometres. Suddenly the taiga parted and Lake Baikal lay at our feet, a gem among the surrounding hills. We drove down to the shore of the lake and were given a hearty welcome by the Fishermen's Collective. Demin Victor, the President of the Collective, invited us to lunch in the house of one of the members, a wizened old woman who was an expert cook. We had lunch consisting of fish soup, fish cakes, fried fish, steamed fish and cold fish. The Baikal has many varieties of fish which are not known anywhere else. Each fish course was followed by a glass of vodka and a toast, in proposing which Victor showed as much gusto as in drinking vodka. I was astonished to see how well-informed he was. In the course of our talk, I told him that my home was in Kerala, which was well-known in the Soviet Union as the only Communist State in India. He was too tactful to show any special interest in Kerala; he merely said that he presumed that I belonged to the Indian National Congress. No. I said, though I believed in it. Victor agreed that it was the Congress that had fought for and stood for the freedom of India and he proposed a toast for the third time to Jawahar lal Nehru. Speaking of the USA, Victor said that he thought that Lippmann was the wisest of all American political correspondents; Victor had no use for Lawrence or Margaret Higgins or the Alsop Brothers. He said that he had once praised Lippmann, to an American visitor and been told that Lippmann did not count at all in America. 'So much the worse for America,' said Victor-a sentiment which I am inclined to endorse

After lunch, Victor took us for a cruise on the lake. Fortunately it was a calm day, for cruising on the lake is dangerous when winds from different directions—known as Kultuk, Burguzin and Sarma—cross each other. Then the lake would be like a raging sea. On the day on which we sailed on it however Baikal was like the lake of Innisfree, and the water was so transparent that one could almost see the bottom. Victor spoke in superlatives about the lake. It was the

deepest lake in the world, 5710 feet. Its water was absolutely transparent, and he demonstrated this by making us throw a coin into the lake and watch it sink. It was also the coldest lake in the world. When we were cruising on it we had to wrap curselves in mufflers and overcoats, for the temperature of the water was only 8° whereas the temperature in Irkutsk was 32°. Geologists say that Lake Bajkal was once connected with the Arctic and was later separated from it by some terrible terrestrial disturbance. There are many hot springs around the lake; and 75 per cent of the fauna and flora there are peculiar to it, so much so that the lake has been called the Museum of Living Fossils. Seals abound; and there is a strange viviparous fish called the golomyanka which lives at a great depth and is encased in a thick layer of fat, so much so that when it is brought to the surface it melts and runs in the sun. Three hundred and thirty-six streams flow into the lake but only one flows out, and this has given rise to a beautiful legend.

Once there lived an old man called Baikal who had 335 sons, but only one daughter called Angara. When she grew up into a beautiful girl a seagull brought her news of a fine young man called Yenisei who was anxious to marry her; but her father would not let her go. Therefore, on a dark night, Angara rushed out; and on seeing her escape, Baikal caught hold of the nearest cliff and hurled it at her. The cliff struck the earth in front of Angara and can still be seen. On and on fled Angara until she flung herself into

the arms of her waiting lover, Yenisei.

This is the legend as it exists among the Buryat-Mongols whose home used to be in the Baikal region. I have also read an American version of this legend, according to which Angara was not the daughter but the young wife of old Baikal, who was intensely jealous of her and sought to prevent her from going to her lover, Yenisei, by hurling a cliff at her. This reminded me of a case which I tried in Peshawar, of a woman who went out of her husband's bed at midnight on the pretext of answering the call of nature; and seeing

that she did not return for an unconsciouably long time, her husband went out, found her in the arms of her lover, and hurled a stone which killed them both on the spot.

Angara was too full of energy to submit to Baikal's will, but what Baikal could not do is now being accomplished by Soviet technicians. The Angara is being tamed. We visited the hydro-electric project in process of construction on the outskirts of Irkutsk. A dam, 2.4 kilometres long and 64 metres high, was being built across the Angara. This would raise the water-level of the river by 30 metres, and the resulting reservoir would extend from Irkutsk to Lake Baikal. A number of islands in the river have already disappeared, and the villages have been moved elsewhere. The hydro-electric station is to have eight turbines, each of 82,000 kilowatts; the seventh turbine went into production on the day of our visit.

A more ambitious project is planned on the Angara at Bratsk, with a capacity of 3,600,000 kw. The construction of another hydro-electric station, with a capacity of 4 million kw, has already started at Krasnoyarsk on the Yenisei; and the Soviet Government have under consideration a still more fabulous project on the Yenisei, producing 7 million kilowatts. Thus not only the impetuous Angara but her majestic spouse, the Yenisei, is being harnessed to the service of man.

THE BURYAT-MONGOL ASSR

We left Irkutsk on 17 June by train for Chita and saw the Irkut river joining the Angara. About this too the Mongols have a legend. Irkut heard from a seagull that Baikal had a beautiful daughter called Angara. He therefore raced down in a south-easterly direction to meet her. When he was within reach of Baikal, he heard that Angara had left her home and was on her way to meet her lover, Yenisei.

Undaunted, Irkut suddenly turned northwards and joined Angara near Irkutsk and, losing himself in her, went on to the Arctic. The Mongols must be a people with a romantic

imagination to have invented such legends.

For eight hours our train ran along the shore of Lake Baikal. It seemed to hug the lake for most of the time; occasionally, it would move away and look at the lake through the leaves of the trees, as a lover looks at his beloved through a lattice window. Sometimes the train would go off in a huff and puff and let off smoke in the tunnels through the mountains, but always, desolate and sick of an old passion, it would come back to the lake and see it breaking into ripples of laughter.

Rarely have I enjoyed a journey by train so much as this. To our left was the lake, wearing different colours but always transparently clear and making low sounds on the white pebbles on her shore. To our right were high mountains, still with patches of snow. From these mountains flowed innumerable streams which we crossed every few minutes.

And all around there was the eternal taiga.

We travelled from Irkutsk to Chita in an international waggon on the train bound for Peking from Moscow. On the day on which we travelled, the waggon was truly international; among the passengers were Indians, Chinese, Russians, Koreans and Mongols, Alfred Gonsalves shared his compartment with a Korean and Nanavati formed the acquaintance of a Mongol. Both the Korean and the Mongol were unusually communicative; though both belonged to communist states, their outlook was quite different. The Korean was a fervent believer in Marxism as the only gospel for the salvation of mankind. For the non-communist world he had nothing but hatred. He was no believer in co-existence; he simply could not understand how a country like India could seek technical assistance from the USA as well as from the USSR. We tried to explain that we had our own philosophy of life and our own system of government and that, in developing our industries, we saw nothing wrong

in availing ourselves of technical and financial assistance from whichever quarter it came, provided no political strings were attached to it. But no amount of explanation would convince the Korean that this attitude was correct or feasible.

Very different was our Mongol companion. Almost his first words were: 'All these beautiful places, the lake and everything around it, used to be ours; but China took off one big slice, and Russia another; and we are left with the rest. But it looks as if what has been left to us will remain with us.' He referred to the terrible and repeated purges to which the Mongols were subjected in Stalin's time. He spoke of a friend whose one crime was that he had studied abroad. For this he was put in prison for many years and had just been released. Before his arrest, he had had no political views but now he was a bitter and determined enemy of communism. Our Mongol companion admitted however that latterly the Soviet attitude had changed. Some time ago, Khrushchev visited Ulan Ude, the capital of Buryat Mongolia. He reopened the cases of a thousand Mongols who had been imprisoned in Stalin's days and found that only two had been rightly convicted. Khrushchev ordered the rest to be released, and compensation was paid to the relatives of many who had died in the meantime.

We reached Ulan Ude, the capital of the Buryat Mongol ASSR, on the evening of 17 June. Ulan Ude, and indeed the whole of the Buryat Mongol ASSR, is a closed area. We were therefore unable to stay there. In Ulan Ude and in the other stations at which the train stopped we found that the people were mostly Russians, not Mongols. The systematic migration of Russians to this region has reduced the Mongols to a minority. Buryat Mongolia, like other parts of the Soviet Union, has undoubtedly benefitted from the Soviet policy of promoting education and industrialization. Some backward-looking Mongols however must still be sympathizing with their poet, Solbone Tuya, who wrote a few years ago:

No, keep your overcrowded cities With their sophisticated air.
Guileless and free, I need the country, The cool wind, blowing through my hair.
Give me the steppe, limitless, wind-swept, Its vastness, stretching on each side, Where, free from orders and surveillance, Man's goodness is his only guide.

The journey from Irkutsk to Chita was the most jerky one I had ever experienced. The train performed as many motions as a ship does on the sea; it seemed to roll and pitch and toss from side to side. In the morning it fulfilled the function of my masseuse in the sanatorium in the Crimea; it promoted the circulation of my blood without my having to do anything at all. And in the evening it rocked me, like an ungentle nurse, to sleep. So well did I sleep despite, or perhaps because of, the movements of the train that I was barely awake when we reached our destination, Chita, at 6 a.m.

Chita used to be the capital of the Far Eastern Republic in the early days of the Revolution. It was far less industrialized than Irkutsk and was cleaner and pleasanter. All around Chita was a belt of mountains which did not dominate it but seemed to hold it their hands. We drove out of Chita for about 50 kilometres along the road to Vladivostok and had a lovely view of the Ingoda river. Another road takes one in six or seven hours to the Sino-Soviet frontier. The vicinity of China was obvious. The carpets in our luxurious room, with green wallpaper, blue cushions and pink curtains, were Chinese. The delicious apples which we tasted in a restaurant in Chita were also Chinese. In the train there was a Chinese as well as a Russian menu and, at the frontier, we were told that the Russian cook would be replaced by a Chinese cook. Chita was such a charming spot that we were happy feasting our eyes on the hills and meadows and valleys, instead of visiting, as our guide had suggested, a school, a hospital, a solders' home and a factors for making compressors. These we had seen in many parts of the Soviet Union but Chita had a rustic charm to which we abandoned ourselves.

ACROSS SIBERIA BY AIR

We returned from Chita to Moscow by air, a journey which should have taken only nine hours but took nineteen. Soon after leaving Chita, we saw three big lakes and some smaller ones, engraved on the ground like oval mirrors. We had hoped to obtain a fine view of Lake Baikal from the air, but there was a pall of mist and dust over the lake.

In two hours we reached Irkutsk, which was broiling in the heat. We were held up there for a number of hours as the airport was enveloped in a dust-haze and visibility was impossible. Eventually, we flew from Irkutsk to Omsk in three hours. The captain of the plane, a triple millionaire, for he had flown three million kilometres, asked me to the cockpit of the plane. There, 30,000 feet below, lay the vast Siberian plain. Every few minutes, the great rivers of Siberia -the Angara, the Yenisei, the Ob and the Irtish-would appear on the ground, approach us, accost us and recede.

We reached Omsk, where the temperature was 35°. There we were told that the Moscow airport was closed because of rain and fog and mist, that the temperature in Moscow was down to freezing point and that the flight would be resumed in two hours. But two hours became four, and six and eight. We were taken to a hotel where some forty camp beds had been laid out in the corridor for the passengers of the plane. Fortunately we ourselves were given a bedroom with a bath. Alfred Gonsalves, too, had a bedroom but it was full of mosquitoes which bit him so hard that in the morning his bedsheet was found to be bloodstained. At last we left Omsk and arrived in Moscow after three hours' flight at 12 noon, Moscow time, and 6 p.m. Chita time.

During our air journey we were impressed with the immensity of Siberia even more than during our train journey. Immense indeed are the distances of Siberia; so are its resources. Siberia is fast becoming the chief bastion of Soviet power. Here lies 75 per cent of the Soviet Union's coal; 80 per cent of its water-power; 80 per cent of its timber; and 65 per cent of its tin. These vast potentialities are only beginning to be exploited. If the Soviet Government attains its declared objective of 'overtaking the USA's industrial might in the shortest historical period', the credit will go largely to Siberia. Even in the nineteenth century it was vaguely known that Siberia had immense resources, but it was not until recently that a systematic attempt has been made to exploit them. In the nineteenth century Alexander Herzen, the great liberal who was banished from Russia, wrote: 'Siberia has a great future. But Siberia is thought of as a cellar in which there are large quantities of gold, furs and other wealth, but a cold cellar, a place of deep snows, a vast wilderness, empty of people and full of misery. This is untrue. It is only that the moribund Russian Government which accomplishes everything by force and the knout is unable to impart that spirited impulse which could push Siberia ahead with American speed.' The Communist Govern-ment, too, has not refrained from the use of force and the knout, of which the first piece of news which assailed our ears on our arrival in Moscow, the execution of Nagy, was a grim reminder, but communism has certainly given a spirited impulse which was previously lacking and is pushing Siberia, and all USSR, ahead with more than American speed.

9 ARMENIA

JOURNEY TO YEREVAN

Ever since I arrived in the Soviet Union I had been wishing to visit its southernmost Republic, Armenia. It was not until the end of my sixth year that I was able to fulfil this dream. Until Stalin's death, and for some time thereafter, Armenia and indeed the entire region of the Black Sea and the Caspian had been closed to foreigners. Even in 1958 diplomats were not allowed to visit Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, and the neighbouring zone bordering Turkey. Anujee and I however were given special permission to visit Yerevan. Just before we left Moscow, Protocol rang me up and told me that the authorities were sorry they were unable to extend this permission to Thomas Abraham, who was to have come with me. He accompanied me as far as Tbilisi and then went to Baku to meet our trainees in oil engineering.

On 3 October 1958 we flew by a jet plane to Tbilisi. This journey took only two hours against eight by an ordinary plane. Hardly had we reclined in our seat after a frugal lunch, so different from the sumptuous meals served by the Air-India International, when we were told that we were passing over Rostov-on-Don. We saw Rostov and tried to trace the Volga-Don Canal on the ground when the Greater Caucasus began to appear before us. Soon we passed over them with Mt Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe, to our right and Mt Kazbek, 16,558 feet high to our left. Both were covered with snow, Elbrus fully and Kazbek almost fully. Distracting our attention from both was a dazzling Georgian girl whom Anujee spotted and pointed out to me as soon

as we entered the plane. She turned out to be our hostess. Flying at a height of 25,000 feet in an under-pressurized plane we were feeling drowsy, but we were determined to keep awake lest we should miss, even for a moment, the beauty of Mts Elbrus and Kazbek and of that Georgian girl.

We left Tbilisi by train at about 8 p.m. and were due to reach Yerevan at 6.30 in the morning. I woke up an hour earlier and looked out. The dawn was breaking and the objects of nature were just becoming visible. We seemed to be on an elevated, treeless plateau which reminded me of my journey across the Roof of the World. Suddenly a veritable apparition of a mountain sprang up on the horizon. It was the Biblical mountain, Ararat. Mt Ararat was free from snow and ice except for a layer at the top which made it look as if it was wearing a white Turki cap. Ararat, 16,945 feet high, was lower than Elbrus, but in its lonely majesty it was even more impressive. Elbrus and Kazbek had their peers, though not quite so outstanding as themselves; the 'rule of collectivity' seemed to prevail in the Caucasus. The position of Mt Elbrus was rather like that of Khrushchev before Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Zhukov had been purged. But Ararat was a veritable Stalin among mountains. Or, since it is now in Turkey, it might be more appropriate to compare it to the Sultan of Turkey; and by his side was Little Ararat, looking like his heir-apparent.

We got into conversation with our neighbours in the train, an Armenian doctor and his wife, who were travelling to their homeland from Moscow after the lapse of nearly a quarter of a century. Pointing to Mt Ararat Mrs Zargarian told us that it used to be in Russian territory; after the First World War all that region, including Kars and Ardahan, which had belonged to Russia before the war was seized by Turkey. The young Soviet Republic had its own troubles and was unable to oppose Turkey, and the Kars and Ardahan valley was the price which Lenin had to pay to have a triendly neighbour in the south. Mrs Zargarian pointed out the river Aras, which was now the boundary between Turkey, and the

USSR, and told us that the land on the Turkish side of the river was much richer than on the Soviet side.

THE ARMENIAN TRAGEDY

In Yerevan we were accommodated in a newly constructed, seven-storied hotel in the centre of the city. On our arrival in the hotel, we noticed a large crowd of people standing at the entrance. One of them, a very old woman, half-blind, asked us whether we had come from Los Angeles. We said 'No' and passed on. Our Armenian guide explained to us that these people had come in order to see whether any of their relations, from whom they had been separated for decades, were amongst the visitors to the hotel. I suspected that he was trying to pull our legs; it seemed to me that the people crowding in front of the hotel had come out of curiosity to see foreigners of perhaps in the hope of getting something from the American tourists who had come to Yerevan. Subsequently we discovered that our guide was speaking no more than the truth

One day a well-dressed and handsome American woman accosted me in the lift to the sixth floor where we were staying and told us that she was Armenian by birth and that she would very much like to have my autograph. Later on, when we were going down to lunch, we saw her in front of the restaurant. I introduced her to Anujee and asked her to join us at lunch. Anujee did not like this. She has a notion, compounded of Indian puritanism, English etiquette and feminine jealousy, that any foreign woman who talks unintroduced to her husband is an adventuress, especially if she is good-looking.

At lunch our companion related her history. She was born in Armenia during the First World War when it was part of Turkey. Her father was killed during the massacres of 1920, and her mother thereupon took her away to USA,

but left her sister behind. She had now come in search of her sister and to her great joy had managed to find her. Our companion was typically American. She had brought her iron all the way from America by air to press her clothes in the Soviet Union. I expressed my surprise that she should have done so, for after all people in the Soviet Union were not so particular about the clothes they wore. 'But you see,' she said, 'we have been taught that to dress well is to feel well.'

This lady had also brought with her some underwear for her long-missing sister. Americans have an idea that Soviet women have no underwear. An American, married to a charming and talented Indian friend of ours, brought some nylon underwear from the USA as a present for the world-famous ballerina, Ulanova. He succeeded in having an interview with her. He kissed her feet with emotion and gave the garment to her saying, 'You can never have too many of these.' Apparently the interpreter translated this by, 'You cannot be having many of these.' Ulanova was visibly annoyed and refused to accept the gift. The American mentioned this incident to us and threw the entire blame on the interpreter. It did not strike him how incongruous it was to give a present of this kind to a woman of the standing of Ulanova.

Almost all the American Armenians were old. Some had come to see their homeland before they died; others to find their relations. One found his mother who he thought must have died long ago; she was now 97 and enjoying perfect health. There is something in the bracing highland air of Armenia which makes people live long. At the airfield and in front of our hotel it was pathetic to see groups of bedraggled men and women, showing foreigners old pictures of, or letters from, their relations and anxiously inquiring about them. This sight impressed us with the magnitude of the Armenian tragedy. Truly the sorrow of the Armenians through the ages is, as their poet Tumanyan has put it, like a shoreless sea.

I had a talk with one Mongouni, a member of an American tourist group living in the same hotel as ours. He had been in the USA for 56 years and had now come to Yerevan to see his motherland before he died. He sought an interview with me in order to send a message through me to Jawaharlal Nehru. He came into my room at the appointed hour and asked if he might keep his hat on, for he had a cold. 'Certainly,' I said, and closed the doors and windows, though the air outside was balmy and the sun was shining. Mongount was still feeling cold and said that he wanted to go upstairs for his overcoat. I thereupon offered mine. Wearing his hat and my overcoat, shivering with cold and trembling with emotion, this octogenarian started telling me about the suffering of his people.

Mongouni distinctly remembered, and vividly described, the massacre of 1895 when some 200,000 Armenians were killed and 300,000 fled. In particular he described the massacre of 10,000 Armenians in a town called Palu which turned the Euphrates red. In 1901, Mongouni got out of Turkey after many difficulties and went to the USA. There he heard of other massacres to which his countrymen were subjected from time to time. The most devastating of all was in 1915, when a million Armenians were massacred and more than a million were forced to leave the country. Subsequently, when Turkey invaded Kars and Ardahan and took them from Russia, she indulged in still another massacre of Armenians. 'What else can you do with lice?', said Enver Pasha once.

SOVIET ARMENIA

Until I visited Armenia I had somehow connected it with the sea. I used to think that it was a low-lying land with a seafaring people. Perhaps I gained this impression from the Armenians in India, who were mostly traders and lived in the seaports of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. But I found Armenia very different from what I had imagined it to be. Its average elevation was about 4000 feet above sea-level. It was a vast stony plateau surrounded by low hills, with Mt Ararat dominating them all. Occasionally there was a line of trees which looked like a moustache, a false moustache which had not grown but been stuck on. Armenia seemed a dumping-ground on which providence, after fashioning beautiful Georgia, had flung all the superfluous stones and boulders. Yet, to quote Dorothy Wellesley's lines:

I am in love with her.
No appurtenances are hers;
No trappings are hers, only stone,
Fossil stone she has grown;
No flesh tint is here. The winds blow
Always from Asia, retrieved her flesh,
Of cestasy, long ago.

Armenia has every variety of stone, including marble. From time immemorial Armenians have been excellent stone-carvers, but their skill was used almost exclusively for building churches and palaces: the houses were mud hovels with thatched roofs. Now there is great constructional activity everywhere. All round Yerevan multistoried blocks of flats are rising.

The Red Square, in which our hotel was situated, was dominated by a statue of Lenin made by the famous sculptor, Mercolev. Far more imposing was the statue of Stalin on a hillock close by. That statue rose 175 feet from the ground, and Stalin's own figure, standing on a massive pedestal, was 50 feet high. I was told that in Stalin's time the statue used to be called Stalin Statue and the park around it used to be called Stalin Park. Now they are called Victory Statue and Victory Park

Armenia, however, has no special reason to dislike Stalin; it escaped his purges. It struck me as one of the most contented Republics of the Soviet Union. Historically, Russia has been the protector of Armenian Christians against their

Muslim rulers. In the Historical Museum at Yerevan, I was shown with pride the manifesto of Peter the Great in 1723 and of Catherine the Great in 1799 inviting Armenians from Turkey and Persia to come and settle in Russia and offering them special privileges. An Armenian, Orii, was the first Russian Ambassador to Persia. In the eighteenth century Armenians flocked to Russia in large numbers and the trade of Persia with India on the one hand and with Russia on the other was mostly in their hands. In 1828, by the Treaty of Turmanchi, the area constituting the present Republic of Armenia was ceded to Russia by Persia, and from this time onward the Armenians looked up to Russia as their protector against the Turks.

If history has predisposed the people of Armenia in favour of Russia, the progress which they have been able to make during the last three decades has confirmed their loyalty to the Soviet Union. When Soviet power came to this region, said Mikoyan-its most famous son-Armenia was a land of orphans and tears. Now this tiny republic is keeping pace with her sister states in the Soviet Union and is even forging ahead of them in some respects. Yerevan, which in 1922 was a middle-sized village, has grown into a fine modern city. Then its population was 30,000; now it is over 400,000. Then only 15 per cent of the people were literate; now almost everyone can read and write. Then the only industries were a tannery, a few primitive copper mines worked by the British and the French, and a small cognac factory; now there are a hundred industrial enterprises in and around Yerevan. Agriculture, too, is making great progress. On the surface, no land is more unpromising for agriculture, and yet we had more delicious grapes and peaches and apricots in Armenia than in any other Republic. And Armenian cognac is the best in the Soviet Union.

The development of industry and agriculture in Armenia has been greatly facilitated by the construction of the Sevan-Zango multipurpose project. Lake Sevan is a beauty spot. Situated at a height of 6250 feet above sea-level, it is the

highest lake in the USSR. It is as big as all the lakes in Switzerland combined. Twenty-eight streams flow into it, but only the river Zango flows out to join the river Aras on the Turko-Armenian frontier after a course of 65 miles and a drop of 3300 feet. A cascade of eight hydro-electric stations, with a capacity of 35,000 kilowatts, is being built on the Zango river. The total output of electricity in Armenia before the Revolution was 4,000 kilowatts and only the city of Yerevan was supplied with electricity. Now electricity is supplied to all the principal cities and to about 90 per cent of the villages.

The construction of these hydro-electric stations and the consequent drainage of Lake Sevan have marred its beauty. The water-level of the lake has fallen, and it is estimated that at the present rate of drainage the area of the lake will be reduced to less than half in fifty years. A number of villages have sprung up on what used to be the bed of the lake. A former island has ceased to be an island; the water has receded from one side, and it is now connected with the land. We saw on this peninsula two picturesque monasteries, one dating from pre-Christian times and the other from the ninth century -melancholy witnesses of a time when religion, whether pagan or Christian, was a source of comfort to frail mortals.

I noticed that the economic development of Armenia was carried out entirely by the Armenians themselves. In this respect, Armenia was different from Central Asia. In Kirghistan, Kazakhstan and even in Uzbekistan, Russian experts could be seen in hundreds and there was large Russian migration to these areas. In Armenia, on the contrary, the level of technical education is so advanced that it has not only a sufficient number of specialists for its own development but has been supplying them in appreciable numbers to other Republies. With their keen intelligence, capacity for hard work and aptitude for foreign languages, the Armenians have been playing an important role not merely in the field of industry but in science, administration, diplomacy, art

and music. One need only recall the names of Mikoyan, who survived all the political purges in the USSR, among the leaders of the Soviet Union; Mirgulian, the brilliant 28-year-old mathematician and corresponding member of the All-Union Academy of Sciences; Marshal Bagramian, one of the sixty-five Armenian generals thrown up by the Second World War; Khachaturian, one of the big three in the world of Soviet music; and Nalbandian, who has painted Anujee as well as Stalin.

ANCIENT ARMENIA

I was as much interested in Armenia's storied past as in contemporary Armenia. In some other Republics, the present has overwhelmed the past. In Armenia, the past walks shoulder to shoulder with the present.

The Historical Museum gave a vivid picture of Armenian civilization from prehistoric times to the present day. After showing us the relies of the palaeolithic and neolithic ages, the Director of the Museum showed us some stone barrels, each with a capacity for storing 1300 litres of wine, which he claimed to be at least three thousand years old. The coming of Christianity to Armenia was illustrated by a number of pictures and images. St Thaddeus and St Bartholomew were the first evangelists but they came into fierce conflict with the pagan religion, and it was not until the beginning of the fourth century that Christianity triumphed in Armenia. Even so, said the Director, Christianity came to Armenia 500 years before it reached Kiev and 700 years before Moscow was even known to exist.

In the Museum of Ancient Manuscripts, we were shown the first book printed in Armenia: it was dated 1512, decades earlier than any book was printed in Russia. The oldest manuscript on paper was dated A.D. 972. We were particularly charmed by the illuminated miniatures in the Arme-

nian manuscripts of the tenth century. There were books on history, philosophy, geography, astronomy and medicine, testifying to the high degree of civilization in Armenia during medieval times.

One of our most interesting excursions from Yerevan was to the site of a ruined temple in a place called Garni. The massive temple stands, surrounded by rugged mountains, at the edge of a precipice, dropping several hundred feet to a river running through caverns measureless to man. The site is covered with broken columns and pillars, friezes and cornices, all beautifully engraved with geometrical designs. The temple was built in the third century B.C., destroyed by the Romans and rebuilt by an Armenian king in the first century A.D. It was finally destroyed by an earthquake in 1687 and has defied all attempts at reconstruction.

The temple of Garni was also a fort and a royal resort in summer. On one side we saw the ruined baths and the heating system, still more or less intact. The baths had a mosaic floor in which there was a picture of the sea with all its creatures, fishes, nymphs and mermaids. Remove the dust from their faces, and they look at you with centuries-old eyes. In one corner of the picture there is a forlorn fisherman, and below him is an inscription echoing the cry of unsuccessful fishermen through the ages: 'I worked hard but caught nothing.'

On another day, we drove to the ancient monastery of Etchmiadzin, some 40 kilometres from Yerevan. It was a dusty drive over an uneven road, with vineyards and orchards on both sides, and poplars giving the countryside a Kashmir touch. On entering I tchmiadzin we saw the theological seminary where Mikoyan used to be a student. There we visited an ancient church first built in mud in A.D. 301 and rebuilt in stone in the sixth century. Ever since the Armenian Church refused to accept the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon regarding the nature of Christ it has retained its separate identity, and the efforts of successive Popes to force the Church into reunion have been in vain. We met

the Patriarch of the Church who, I was told, was a distinguished scholar.

The monastery at Etchmiadzin contained a number of pictures and icons. The museum attached to it was even more interesting. The most interesting object in the museum was the dagger which one of the Roman soldiers plunged into the body of Christ soon after the crucifixion in order to see whether he was really dead. This dagger was brought to Yerevan by St Thaddeus whose hand, too, we saw embalmed in a silver case.

Among the pictures in the museum, there are two I like to remember. One is Armenia, robed as a woman, sitting amidst the stones and boulders of her native land and weeping over its repeated destruction. Another is a picture of Noah's Ark descending on Mt Ararat. Ararat is as sacred to the Armenians as Kailas to the Hindus, Fujiyama to the Japanese and Bogdo Ola to the Mongols. For centuries Ararat had been in Armenian territory, and it still appears on the national emblem of the Republic of Armenia side by side with the star, the sickle and the scythe. To the Armenians, Mt Ararat is always Father Ararat. 'Our Father', they pray, 'is in prison. May he be free.'

10 AN ARCTIC PORT

MURMANSK

In August 1959 I flew from Moscow to Murmansk, one of the northernmost towns in the USSR. When we crossed the Arctic Circle in the afternoon, I had the same thrill as when I crossed the equator many years ago. The crossing of the equator would have passed unnoticed if Neptune had not appeared on board and pushed some of the younger passengers into the swimming pool. There was no such ceremony when we crossed the Arctic Circle. Nature, however, was bent on impressing the occasion on our minds. We were suddenly confronted by dense, rain-bearing clouds, through which our plane wriggled its way as best it could. Finding the clouds impenetrable, and overcoming the average Soviet pilot's tendency to fly low, our plane shot up above the clouds and remained there for a few minutes. Then it suddenly darted downwards, because ice was beginning to form on its wings. Whenever the clouds lifted, we had glampses of the land below. The land, somehow, seemed to consist morely of water. The White Sea and the Barents Sea had encreached into it; and the entire terr tory was deeply dented with pools and lakes. Trees were conspicuous by their absence, there were only shrubs. We were now in the tundra zone.

We alighted from the plane at about 6 p.m. but the sun was still higher the leavens. A Volga met us at the airfield and drove is over 28 kilometres of bumps road to Murmansk. Despite the bump, it was a pleasant drive. We skirted a long low hill to our right and the Tuluea and the Kola rivers to our left until we reached our hotel, overlooking the pic-

turesque Bay of Kola. The hotel was appropriately named the Arctic. I was given a de luxe suite which, with its chandeliers, velvet curtains and marble table-lamps was a pale imitation of the Astoria in Leningrad. When I went to bed at 11, the sun was still shining and the street lamps had not been lit; and I could not sleep till midnight because of the light outside. Within an hour or two, I woke up because the light came streaming in. Alfred Gonsalves was wiser; he had got his maid to nail a thick blanket over his window and slept well. When he told me so the next morning, I reminded him of the considerate hostess in Punch who, when her guest told her that he had slept like a log, exclaimed: 'Oh, natural sleep is so wonderful!'

After a few hours' fitful sleep I woke up into a day which, I was told, was typically Murmanskian. For one moment the sun would shine; then the sky would be overcast; there would be a grinding drizzle or a heavy downpour; and then again the sun would appear nervously and bashfully. And for seven months in the year the sun would not shine at all. I told an official of the city that these winter months must be terribly cold. Terrible, yes, he said, but not so cold; not much colder than Moscow, for the Gulf Stream flowed past the coast of Murmansk and kept that port open for navigation throughout the year, unlike other Arctic ports, which were closed for 250 days. Even the White Sea ports had ice for 150 days. Leningrad itself, a thousand kilometres to the south, is closed for six months, leaving to Murmansk the honour of being 'the window on Furope' in the winter.

I called on Konovolov, the Chairman of the City Soviet A native of Belo-Russia, he had been working in Murmansk for a number of years and was proud of its progress. He told us that Murmansk was the largest polar city in the world. It was a new city, unlike Kola next door, which was founded by Novgorod traders in the thirteenth century and had given its name to the bay on which Murmansk stood and the peninsula in which Murmansk was situated. Murmansk was founded in 1916 towards the end of the Tsarist

regime. Since then its growth has been phenomenal. In 1926 its population was about 9000; in 1949, 117,000; and now, 226,000. For a city which is only a little over 40 years old, it has suffered much. Konovolov told me that during the Civil War it was occupied by the British and the Americans. He related with relish the story of the counter-revolution and foreign intervention, when fourteen foreign armies tried to throttle the young Soviet Republic. In front of my room in the Arctic Hotel was an ugly whitewashed monument, which looked like a deformed Shivalingam, on which was hung a printed inscription:

To the sufferers from the Intervention of 1918-1920. From the workers and fishermen of Murmansk, on the 10th anniversary of the triumph of the October Revolution.

During the Second World War, the port of Murmansk played a vital role; it was there that Western supplies for waging the war against Hitler were discharged. The German armies, however, bombed Murmansk almost out of existence in 1942. A woman whom we met told me that when she returned to Murmansk after the Second World War she could hardly recognize the streets; they had been covered with rubble and the entire town had been destroyed and burned. It is now being rebuilt in the usual pretentious Soviet style, with all the adjuncts of a Soviet town clubs, schools, theatres, technical institutes, cinemas, a television centre and a stadium. Housing, however, is still inadequate, A resident of Murmansk told us that she and her two grownup daughters had to live in a single room of 15 square metres and that her sons-in-law too had to be accommodated when they came to Murmansk Since then there has been hectic activity all over the Soviet Union to provide adequate accommodation for workers.

The Chairman of the City Soviet told me that the chief industry of Murmansk was fishing. This was only too obvious as the whole place smelt of fish. A large fishing fleet was bying opposite our hotel, and we were taken round two

ships and a trawler. We also visited a state farm in which silver fox and mink were reared in thousands for their valuable fur.

Murmansk was unlike any other town I had visited in the USSR. It has left a strange impression on me. It can be described as a twilight town where, in the summer months. the sun does not set or, for that matter, rise, because it hides behind a curtain of clouds like a Muslim woman behind purdah; and it has seven months of winter. Though an Arctic town, Murmansk seemed to harbour as many flies and mosquitoes as the tropics. Drunken sailors could be seen at all hours, sometimes just sufficiently drunk to wave or whistle to the girls who were passing by and eluding them. and more often too drunk even to make an amorous gesture. Yet Murmansk was conscious of its situation as the Western terminus of the great North Sea route to the Pacific Ocean and the Eastern terminus of the sea route to the Atlantic. It was heavy with memories of the humiliation it had suffered during the Civil War and the damage it had sustained in the Second World War and proud of its role in the present Seven Year Plan as a principal supplier of fish and fur in the Soviet Union.

THE KARLLO-FINNISH REPUBLIC

On 12 August we travelled by train from Murmansk to Leningrad. It was sheer vanity which prompted me to do so. I wanted to feel and boast that I had travelled on the northernmost railway in the world. I was assured by Alfred Gonsalves, who had been assured by Valia, who had been assured by Burobin, that the journey would take only 16 hours. This seemed incredibly quick by Russian standards so we asked Valia to make certain of the timings. After due inquiries Valia assured us that if we left Murmansk at 6 p.m. we would be in Leningrad at 10 a.m. the next day.

On getting into the train, however, we learnt from the conductor that we would reach Leningrad not on the next day, but the next day but one, at 10 a.m.! And so I settled down to a 40-hour train journey with Alfred Gonsalves and Michael Brecher's Nehru as my companions.

For the first few hours the scenery was what we had expected from our experience in the air-flat land, numerous lakes and ponds, and sparse and stunted vegetation. When we got out of the Arctic Circle, however, the sky became brighter, the trees taller and the woods denser. The forests were beautiful but did not have that primitive energy which

In the evening we passed a long lake called Imandra and at midnight we reached a town called Kandalaksha. A fellow-passenger told us that Kandalaksha was an important industrial town. I was, however, less interested in its industrial importance than in its intriguing Indian-sounding name. We were now passing through the Karelo-Finnish Autonomous Republic; and of all European languages, Finnish is the closest to Sanskrit. Perhaps that accounts for the name Kandalaksha, though no one was able to explain its etymology to me

One of the passengers with whom we became acquainted was a Komi. The Komis were amongst the original inhabitants of the Murmansk coast. Today few of them are left. I asked our companion why the Karelo-Finnish ASSR, which had been a full-fledged Republic until last year, was now merged in the Russian Republic. He said that it was entirely due to administrative reasons, the Karelo-Finnish Republic was too small to be a separate entity. He poohpoohed the idea that its amalgamation into the RSFSR was intended to blast any hopes which Finland might have cherished for regaining this region, which had once belonged to her.

Our friend was proud of Soviet achievements in this area. An engineer in the hydro-electric works in Kandalaksha, he said that that single town today produced more electricity than the whole of Russia before the Revolution. However, he was critical of some aspects of Soviet life. He noticed that the train was overcrowded. A compartment for four had been allotted to Alfred and myself and no one was allowed to occupy the spare berths. 'Why shouldn't we make friends with you?', he asked. 'These are the only opportunities we get for talking to foreigners.' Similarly a woman in Murmansk said, 'What is the use of all this Hindi-Russi Bhai Bhai, if we are never allowed to visit India?' No Soviet citizen would have uttered such sentiments in Stalin's time.

On the second day of our journey from Murmansk, we were no longer in the rolling lowlands of the Arctic Circle. We were in the region of the White Sea and the White Sea-Baltic Canal. The names of the stations in the Karelo-Finnish ASSR were written in Roman as well as Cyrillic characters. In the evening the train stopped for about an hour in a siding to let another train pass. Seeing a lake in the neighbourhood, all the passengers got out. The men discarded their trousers and shirts, and the women their skirts and blouses, and they splashed about in the lake with whatever they had underneath. Another group of passengers formed a circle under a tree and started doing a folk dance to the music of a balalaika. These are the people for whose 'liberation' the churches of America offered prayers during the 'Captive Nations Week' at the beginning of August!

11 A BALTIC STATE

A CITY OF CHURCHES

A FLIGHT of 90 minutes from Leningrad brought us to Riga. For many years Riga had been a closed town; it was only last year, in 1958, that it was opened to foreigners. I had expected to find Riga different from other Soviet towns but I did not think that it would be so different. A pleasant Latvian girl met us at the airfield as the representative of Intourist. One of the first things she told us was that Riga was 'the Paris of the North'. We saw a number of spires and domes at a distance. Sensing our thoughts, Raya said that there were forty churches in Riga and that all of them were functioning. 'Except one,' said Gonsalves. A Catholic and ipso facto a church-goer, he had been feeling guilty that he could not go to church on the previous Sunday, as there was none in Murmansk. He had therefore been making inquiries about the possibility of going to church in Riga; and a Latvian fellow-passenger on the plane had told him that in Riga he would be able to go to as many churches as he wished. Only one, the most famous of them all, had been turned into a museum. Towering over the churches and other historic monuments in Riga stood a modern interloper, a seventeen-storied skyscraper, housing the Latvian Academy of Sciences.

We entered the old city of Riga through the only surviving one of the nineteen gates which it once had. This gate bore the inscription '1680', meaning that it had been renovated in that year. In front of it were two guns captured by Peter the Creat at the battle of Poltava. Soon after we entered the city we saw a church in which a service was going on. It was

a Saturday and I wondered why a service was being held. but Alfred told me that it was an important festival day, in celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin. We went into the church and sat there for about an hour. The atmosphere was different from that of Russian Orthodox churches. The priests were less gorgeously attired; the people were more decorously dressed; the congregation had pews to sit on instead of having to stand pell-mell as in Russia; and there was greater order and perhaps less piety. I saw a long line of persons waiting in a queue, proceeding to a cubicle where a priest was sitting, and whispering something in his ear. It was the first time I had seen a confession in progress. It reminded me of Anatole France who, when a boy, used to invent and confess to the most horrible sins in order to make the priest's hair stand on end 'like quills upon the fretful perpentine'. I noticed that the majority of the persons who confessed were old women. I told Alfred that I could very well imagine a lusty lad like him having to confess frequently, but I could not think why these poor women had to. Alfred told me the story of a woman who used to go and confess every week that she had got angry with her husband who ate garlie; to bear ill-will towards one's lord and master was to sin in the eyes of the Lord. The priest finally tired of the old woman's confession and received her after having had a good bite of garlic himself. This cured her.

The church which we visited was St Jacob's, built in the thirteenth century, but there was an even earlier church which used to have the highest wooden tower in Europe. This had been destroyed by the Germans. Another old church was the Dom, with an organ of 6883 pipes, one of the largest in Europe, and an auditorium which could accommodate 5000 persons. It was now being turned into a museum. I was reminded of the Kazan Cathedral in Leningrad which has been turned into a 'Museum of Religion' and is, in fact, a display of all the iniquities committed in the name of religion.

NEW RIGA

Raya was one of the most interesting persons we had come across in the USSR. She had charm, knowledge, intelligence, energy and linguistic proficiency of a high order. Her English however was beginning to be affected by the company of swarms of American tourists whom she had to escort. When she told me, within a few minutes of our arrival, that Riga was 'the Paris of the North', I took her to be a Latvian patriot. Gradually, I discovered that she was one of those people to whom patriotism was not enough. Her own patriotism was merged in proletarian internationalism, of which the USSR was the spearhead.

On entering Riga, Raya drew our attention to the statue of Kirov. It was in Riga that Kirov signed the treaty under which Soviet Russia recognized the independence of Poland. Kirov was a remarkable man. I have seen statues of him all over the Soviet Union, from Baku on the Caspian Sea to Murmansk in the Arctic; and even in Leningrad there are more statues of him than of Lenin. Raya pointed out Lenin's statue to us and told us that Lenin had been in Riga as a hunted revolutionary in 1900. After this we came to a most impressive statue, called the Statue of Liberty. 'The Germans destroyed it,' Raya said, 'we have set it up again. We don't do away with such things, you know.' This seemed a strange remark, but we held our tongues as we had known

her only for a few minutes.

The next day we had a clear look at the Statue of Liberty. One of the most arresting figures is that of a man, bound by chains and resolutely freeing himself. We asked Raya by whom it was made and when. Raya told us that it was made in 1935 by Zale, a famous sculptor. It bore the inscription 'I atherland and I iberty'. 'Liberty from whom?', we asked, 'Liberty from the Germans,' said Raya, 'for Latvia was a German colony from the thirteenth to the

Russia?', we asked. 'For, after all, Russia was the overload of Latvia from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the end of the First World War.' Raya explained that this could not be, because there was a difference between German and Russian rule. The Germans oppressed the Latvians and treated them as an inferior race, whereas the Russians treated them as equals and did everything possible to develop their culture. Raya then proceeded to give a vivid account of the atrocities committed by the Germans who occupied Riga from 1941 to 1944. They even established concentration camps, of which the most notorious was the one at Salaspils, where they killed hundreds of thousands of people.

Riga struck us as a charming city, and Raya was an indefatigable guide. On our first day she showed us the old monuments. On the second day she took us to the seashore, some 25 kilometres away. It was a Sunday, and the whole population of Riga seemed to have overflowed on to the beach, where the sand, unlike the cobbly, shingly sand on the shores of the Black Sea, was smooth and silken. Though it was midday and the sun was shining, the water was still so cold that people could only splash about instead of bathing. The entire sea coast was dotted for about 30 kilometres with a continuous string of sanatoria, rest-homes and dachas. We visited the most famous of the sanatoria, the Kemeri, named after a woodcutter who discovered mineral springs there more than a century ago. We were told that to drink water from these springs was to get five years younger and to walk under an oak there was to fall instantly in love. This seemed to have an effect on Alfred, who deserted me the next day and spent the whole afternoon with a couple of friends on the seashore. I myself spent the evening at the theatre, seeing Wagner's Tannhauser. Wagner is popular in Latvia because he was a conductor at the Opera Theatre in Riga.

Riga is surrounded by pine-woods. In the middle of them we saw an open-air theatre which could hold 30,000 people.

A strange feature of Riga is the existence of a number of beautiful cemeteries. They stretch for miles and give one the feeling that the dead are as much at home in Riga as the living. These cemeteries belong to different communities, the Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and adherents of the Russian Orthodox Church. There is even a Muslim cemetery in which Tartars used to be buried. One of the Tartars was a wealthy maker of cigarettes before the Revolution, but the days of private enterprise are gone. We visited a modern cemetery, the occupants of which are bound not by a common religion but by common death in the First World War. It is beautifully laid out and a flower garden there was one of the best I have seen anywhere. At the entrance there is a line of linden trees, representing young women mourning. Then come oak trees, the symbol of strength in Latvian folklore. In the centre of the cemetery is Mother Latvia mourning over the dead sons lying at her feet, some in individual graves, others collectively. The most famous of the dead is Zale the sculptor, whose grave bears the simple inscription: 'Here lies Zale, who designed the Statue of Liberty.'

We also visited another cemetery where men were buried without religious rites. It corresponds to the famous Novodevichi in Moscow and is the resting-place of famous writers, artists and statesmen. In the centre is the grave of Rainis, a great writer and a firm disbeliever, who spent many years in exile for his unorthodox views. Above his grave is a beautiful piece of sculpture representing a young man shaking off sleep and rising into the day with the words: 'Strong and

mighty, I shall soar to the sun again.'

Raya impressed on us the remarkable manner in which industry and agriculture had been developing in Latvia during the last decade. Prior to the Revolution, Latvia was essentially an agricultural state, and the only industry was a few textile mills. Now, little Latvia with a population of 2.2 million was producing electrical goods, trains, trams, radios and refrigerators. In the agricultural field, Latvia

had taken up Khrushchev's challenge to the Soviet people to overtake the USA in the production of milk, butter and meat. Already, the Soviet Union surpassed the USA in the production of milk and caught up with her in butter, but was still lagging behind her in the production of meat.

We were also impressed by the cultural development of Latvia and visited some of her museums and picture-galleries. Apart from the opera Tannhauser, we saw Chopiniana and Staburadze, a Latvian ballet. The ballerinas in Riga could hold their own against those in Moscow, but the male dancers were decidedly inferior. Staburadze is based on a popular legend. The heroine falls in love with a boatman on the river Daugawa. Her father insists on her marrying a rich dandy and expels the boatman from the town. He proceeds to the river goddess, Daugawa, who falls in love with him and refuses to part with him. The heroine goes to the goddess and implores her to return her lover to her, but is refused and is turned into a stone on the bank of the river which can still be seen. A hydro-electric project is now under contemplation, as a result of which the legendary stone will disappear. The people of Latvia have been protesting against this proposal; and not long ago a deputation went to Moscow to represent the sentiments of the Latvians to the authorities. However, it is unlikely that their prayers will be heeded for, as Raya put it, Latvia today needs power more than folklore.

On the first day in Riga, Raya had introduced the city to us as 'the Paris of the North'. On our last day, she told us that Riga was 'the pearl of the Baltic'. We agreed and we thanked her for revealing its beauty to us. If the pearl of the Baltie, has lost some of its spiritual lustre, it has gained in material value

12 SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

KIRGHISTAN

Or all the places in the Soviet Union in which I had stayed, the dacha on the outskirts of Frunze, the capital of Kirghistan, was perhaps the loveliest. It was situated at a height of about 2500 feet and commanded a fine view of the Heavenly Mountains (Tien Shan). In front were vineyards and orchards. Behind was a gurgling stream, rippling over pebbles and perpetually chattering. All around were poplar trees, graceful sentinels, keeping watch over us as vigilantly as the Kirghiz sentries proving in the garden. To the north and east were high hills, with a gap between them just wide enough to

reveal the glittering peaks of the Iren Shan.

It was in such places that our sages of vore used to meditate on the mysteries of life and death, and even this remote spot in Central Asia attracted their attention. Not far from Frunze, in the village of Ak-beshim, two Buddhist temples of the seventh or eighth century are being excavated would have liked to see them but were told that the road was had and a bridge had been washed away by recent floods. A member of the Academy of Sciences described to us the structure of the temples. They seem to have been similar to those which were excatated by Aurel Stein on the eastern side of the Tien Shah and which I myself saw in Sinking thirteen years ago. In Issiq Ata, a sanatorium to which we went, we saw a figure of Buddha carved on a huge block of granite. This is said to belong to the third century On either side of it is a sacred inscription in Devanign characters, unfortunately overland by the signatures of pultry

men who, in their thirst for ephemeral immortality, have scrawled their names across it.

The Kirghiz Republic is perhaps the most outstanding example of what Soviet rule has done for primitive peoples. A feudal, or pre-feudal, society is being converted into a modern state; a pastoral tribe into a socialist nation. the same time its typical features have been preserved. The upper valleys, covered with rich Alpine vegetation, are still the abode of shepherds, rearing sheep and goats, of which we saw some superb specimens feeding on the hillside. The great Chu Valley Project has brought thousands of acres under cultivation. Sugarcane is grown so extensively in the Chu Valley that it is commonly called 'the Sugar Valley'. Tobacco and cotton are also grown. Industry has kept pace with agriculture, but not outstripped it as it has done elsewhere in the Soviet Union. We visited a factory for the production of agricultural machinery. Among the minerals which are being exploited are coal, mercury, lead, sulphur, arsenic and even uranium.

In the field of education the progress of the last two decades has been even more remarkable. Before the Revolution barely I per cent of the population could read and write. There were a few mullah schools, where some kind of instruction used to be imparted in Arabic; and literacy among women was unknown. Now there are schools by the hundred, dozens of technical institutes and even a university. By 1952 the educational level had risen sufficiently to justify the establishment of an Academy of Sciences, the youngest in the Soviet Union. There are also a number of theatres. We saw a ballet called Anar, based on a local legend. The part of the heroine, Anar, was performed by a gitted Kirghiz girl who received her training in Leningrad.

In Frunze there is one Dr Tanekev who has named his daughter Indira, after Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter. I expressed a desire to meet little Indira in order to give her a doll which Indira Gandhi had sent for her. Unexpectedly, we were invited to their flat and treated to

a sumptuous Kirghiz meal. Dr Tanekev also told us something of his life history. His parents had been so poor that it was not until after the Revolution that he tasted meat. Their home was only a few miles away from the capital but they could not afford to visit Frunze. Thanks to the Revolution he had been able to receive education, and now he was a doctor. His wife too, a charming cross between a Kirghiz and a Tartar, was a doctor. They were well off by Soviet standards; this year they had even bought a Moscovitch car.

We left the Tanekevs with visions of a quick bath and an early bed, but were told that the mayor's farewell banquet in our honour was ready and the guests had already assembled. When we expressed our surprise at the prospect of another dinner, our host expressed equal surprise that we should have thought that we could get away without a farewell banquet on the last evening of our stay in Kirghizia. Meekly and outwardly cheerfully we went to that banquet, which consisted of a dozen courses apart from zakuski, which formed a dinner in themselves, and was punctuated by toasts. Alfred Gonsalves made up for our deficiency in drinking by nobly quaffing glass after glass of Kirghiz wine, Kirghiz champagne and Kirghiz liqueur. Suddenly he became pale and silent and reeled out of the room. The piece de resistance was a roasted sheep's head which was brought and placed before me as the chief guest. It looked quite lifelike and seemed to implore us not to dismember it. Our host proceeded to chop off an ear and scoop out an eye and gave them to me, and he gave the other eye to Anujee and the other ear to Alfred. To our hosts, the sheep's head was a delicacy of delicacies; to us, to use Gandhiji's phrase, 'a poem of pity'.

KAZAKHSTAN

A flight of 45 minutes, up the mountains to 10,000 feet and

down again to 2000 feet, brought us to Alma Ata. Here too we were accommodated in a beautiful dacha, in a valley surrounded by hills. The view from this dacha was not so sublime as from our residence in Frunze but it was more intimate. With overhanging vines and apple trees laden with fruit, and lovers' lanes ramifying in all directions, this was a place for honeymoon couples rather than for philosophers. Here one thinks of the Garden of Eden rather than of the Kingdom of God.

To pass from Kirghistan to Kazakhstan is like passing from Afghanistan to India, from a high, land-locked and picturesque mountain state into a vast, sprawling subcontinent, with an infinite variety of scenery. Fifteen Kirghistans can easily go into Kazakhstan. Some 2000 miles from west to east and over 1000 miles from north to south, it is situated deep in the heart of Eurasia and is equidistant from the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans. It stretches from the Caspian Sea to the Altai Mountains and from Siberia to the Pamir range. It is the largest Republic in the USSR with the exception of Russia, and larger than all the other 14 Republics combined. Kunaev, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, told me that Kazakhstan was larger than the combined area of Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy.

Kunaev also told me of the great efforts which were being made to develop this vast area. The first five Five Year Plans for Kazakhstan cost 53 billion roubles; the sixth alone is to cost 60 billion roubles. Kazakhstan is rich in minerals. Eighty-six per cent of the lead in the USSR and 40 per cent of the copper and tin are produced in Kazakhstan. It has a largest lead plant and copper plant than any in Europe. Coal production, which centres round Karaganda, is the third largest in the USSR. Before the Revolution a British company had a concession in Karaganda. Since then the production of coal has risen 46 times. As for oil, Karaganda is noted for its quality rather than quantity. It was Kazakhstan petrol which Chkalov used on his pioneer flight

across the North Pole to the USA. Electricity is being developed everywhere and Malenkov is in charge of a big hydro-electric project in Ust Kamenogorsk. The Prime Minister went on to say that Kazakhstan also had many other minerals –bauxite, gold and silver. 'Uranium too?' I asked. 'Yes,' said the Prime Minister with a wink, 'we could find uranium as well, if we wanted.' From the way he smiled and the fact that there is uranium in adjoining Kirghistan, I thought that uranium was also being exploited here.

The greatest exploit of Kazakhstan, however, has been the cultivation of virgin lands. It is here that Khrushchev's great experiment was tried, despite some of his colleagues' opposition, and found successful. The figures given to me were astounding. In 1953 the total cultivated area of Kazakhstan was 9.3 million hectares; by 1957, it had trebled to 27.8 million hectares. Of the 33 million hectares of virgin lands which have been brought under cultivation in the USSR, 21 million lie in Kazakhstan. In 1956, the total output of grain in Kazakhstan was 1400 million poods, of which 1000 came from virgin lands alone. The credit for this tremendous achievement goes primarily to the people of Kazakhstan but they were assisted by a million settlers who came from all over the Soviet Union and even from neighbouring countries such as Bulgaria and Rumania. We were shown a film exalting the spirit of patriotism and adventure which had brought young men and women to work under the most difficult conditions in this desolate region for the glory of their motherland -and of communism.

Alma Ata became the capital of Kazakhstan only in 1929. Before the Revolution this pleasant spot was a cantonment for Russian soldiers and was known as Fort Verney. Since it became the capital, its population has grown from 28,000 to 370,000. Here, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, housing is a great problem and is being resolutely tackled. Many new townships, with all modern amenities, are being built. The deputy mayor of the city, an able Kazakh woman, told

me how different the attitude of the authorities today was from that of the Tsars. In 1916 the citizens of Alma Ata had addressed a petition to the Duma, explaining that the roads in Alma Ata were dirty and dark and the people could not walk about in the evening. The reply was that normal people should stay indoors after dusk!

Our most pleasant experience in Alma Ata was our encounter with a Mother Heroine. She has had 14 children and has named the youngest Indira, after Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter. She has richly earned the title of Mother Heroine, having exceeded the prescribed quota of ten children by four. There is a story in the Soviet Union that when the Order of Mother Heroine was conferred on a woman, and a number of speeches were made eulogizing her services to the state, she replied, accepting the compliments with becoming humility, and then pointed to a timid little individual in a corner and said: 'There sits my helper.'

Indira's father is more than a simple helper of Mother Heroine. He is a hero in his own right, having fought with distinction in the First and Second World Wars. He has rows of medals and decorations and a superb moustache.

Hearing that we were in Alma Ata, this couple invited us to their home. The cities of the Soviet Union are terribly overcrowded and Alma Ata is no exception. The best that an average Soviet citizen can hope for is a three-roomed flat. Indira's parents, however, had an entire three-storied house to themselves. Lvidently, a Mother Heroine has many privileges.

All the fourteen children joined their parents in entertaining us. One sang, another played; and little Indira seemed to feel instinctively that she was the centre of attraction Bottles of wine and champagne were opened, and we were treated to a sumptuous dinner, consisting of Central Asian and Caucasian dishes, for our hosts originally came from the Caucasus. Pulao and kabab and the richest of pastries were served. Toasts were proposed and presents were exchanged. When we were about to leave their house, our host imprinted on my cheeks as well as on Anujee's a full-blooded kiss, in the true Russian style. This was the first time that I had been kissed by a man. It was also the first time that Anujee received the kiss of a stranger. She told me that the resolute impact of his bristly moustache gave her an uncanny sensation. I myself found comfort in the softer osculation of the Mother Heroine who, for all her 14 children, still looked young and attractive.

TAJIKSTAN

Tajikstan was the last Central Asian Republic that I visited. I went there in the summer of 1960 in the exalted company of Dr Rajendra Prasad, President of India. Tajikstan is a frontier republic between the USSR, China and Afghanistan. There the Tien Shan and the Pamirs meet. While flying, we noticed that these ranges were still covered with snow. In the Tien Shan are the two highest peaks in the USSR, namely, Lenin Peak, 23,400 feet, and Stalin Peak, 24,600 feet high. The relative height of these peaks shows the relative esteem in which Lenin and Stalin were ostensibly held in Stalin's lifetime.

Soon after our arrival in Tajikstan we were driven into the country for a sumptuous banquet-cum-concert in honour of the President of India. That drive gave us an idea of the mountainous character of the Republic. We were told that 92 per cent of Tajikstan was covered with mountains and only 8 per cent was cultivable. Our road rose and fell through a cluster of confused hills, behind which stood the snow-capped mountains. I almost felt as if I was in wild Waziristan; at any moment a gang of outlaws might appear and waylay our ear, riddle it with bullets and hold us to ransom! But, no! The pacification of its frontier regions by the Soviet Government has been more thorough than was the pacification of the North-West I rontier of India by the British Government.

Stalinabad used to be called Diushambe, the Tajik word for Monday, because Monday used to be the market-day there. In the adjoining region of Sinkiang, I noticed during my travels in 1944 that a large number of towns were called after the day on which the market was held. Diushambe, we were told, used to be a small village, with only one street lamp lit by kerosene oil and fastened on a 6-foot pole in the market square. Now, like most cities in the Soviet Union, this place has wide streets, squares and parks. widest streets are called Lenin Prospekt and Aini Prospekt. The latter is called after a Tajik writer, Aini, who died in 1954, and in whose memory a mausoleum and a museum are to be erected. Stalinabad has also an artificial lake, called Komsomol lake, because it was built largely by the voluntary labour of Komsomol workers. There we saw the people of Stalinabad boating and bathing under a scorching sun and eating, drinking and making themselves merry in a restaurant which jutted into the lake.

My escort was a very able woman, who seemed to speak with authority about men and things. The progress made by women in Central Asia is truly remarkable. the mayor of Samarkand, who was a woman; so was the chief architect. The President of Uzbekistan was a woman too. She held a sumptuous banquet in our President's honour and adopted him, according to custom, into the Uzbek tribe by dressing him up in a gold-embroidered velvet gown and Uzbek cap. She observed that before the Revolution, and for a decade or two after, many women used to wear veilsa fact which was confirmed by Benediktov, who was an agronomist in Samarkand from 1925 to 1930. Before the Revolution the number of literate women in the Emirate of Bokhara, of which present-day Uzbekistan and Tajikstan were parts, could be counted on the tingers of one hand. Now, literacy is universal among women as well as men

In this connexion I recall a conversation which I had with an old woman in Samarkand in front of the Observatory

of Uluq Beg, a prototype of our own Jantar Mantar in Delhi. She told me that she was an Uzbek, but she had been born a thousand miles away, west of the Urals. Yet she had n ever revisited her home since 1923, because, she said, at the time of the Revolution, she was one of the few women who could read and write and count up to a hundred. So 'our Lenin' asked her to go to Samarkand where there were no literate women at all, and in Samarkand she had stayed all these years as a teacher.

During my stay in the Soviet Union I was constantly impressed by this sense of selfless dedication, which 'our Lenin' has managed to inspire in the mind of the average citizen of the Soviet Union. It is this, more than any other factor, which has made the Soviet Union what it is today.

TURKMENISTAN

It is doubtful if these Central Asian towns will ever change. Their dull mud walls, mud houses and mosques look as if they would remain the same for ever. In most climates they would be washed away, but in Central Asia there is hardly any rain and so they stand for ages. "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be", would be a particularly appropriate motto to place over the gateway of all Central Asian towns."

Thus wrote Sir Francis Younghusband at the beginning of this century. When I visited Sinkiang in 1944, I found that this description was only too true. Fifteen years later, when I went there again from the Soviet side, I found that Sinkiang too had been caught up in the vortex of change. Industrialization had come to this region, which C. P. Skrine once called 'a Central Asian Aready'; and China had literally occupied Urumchi, the capital of Sinkiang. The Chinese had come in such swarms that the local population of Urumchi was reduced to a minority, and there began a

mass migration of disgruntled Uigurs to the adjoining Soviet Republics.

Soviet Turkmenistan affords perhaps the best example of the distance which Central Asia has travelled since the days of Sir Francis Younghuband. I had been to Turkmenistan in the company of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955. That was hardly a visit, for we merely stopped for a couple of hours at the airport at Ashkhabad, where Nehru had a great reception. I paid a more leisurely visit in October, 1966. Prime Minister Gapurov recalled Nehru's visit and told me how disappointed they were that he could not stay there. They had hoped that he would be able to spend at least a day in Ashkhabad and therefore hastily completed the construction of a hotel for him to stay in. It is popularly called Nehru Hotel; and we were happy to have been accommodated there. The last dignitary to have stayed there was the Shah of Iran, whose kingdom adjoins Turkmenistan.

In Ashkhabad the change from the old order has been more dramatic than elsewhere, for even physically hardly anything of the old landscape is left. For this nature is responsible. In 1948 there took place a terrible earthquake which razed the entire town to the ground. In its place has arisen a new Ashkhabad, with broad roads, green parks and lovely avenues. Ashkhabad has one of the longest streets in the USSR, Ulitsa Svobody or Freedom Avenue, which runs straight as an arrow for seven kilometres. It has also various amenities such as clubs, cinemas, theatres and spacious but hastily built apartment houses for workers.

The fear of earthquakes still persists in Ashkhabad and no building is more than three-storied. The one monument which, symbolically enough, has remained undamaged by the earthquake is a statue of Lenin, which stands on a piece of ground where the early revolutionaries, harassed by the Tsar's police, used to hold their meetings. The statue has a decorative background, designed like a carpet. Turkmenistan has been famous for her carpets for centuries; what we in India call Bokhara carpets really come from

Turkmenistan. I visited a carpet factory and saw carpets of many different designs being dexterously woven by the

workers, mostly women.

Lenin's statue bears inscriptions in Arabic, Latin and Russian characters, testifying to the linguistic evolution of the Turkmen language. The introduction of the Russian script has opened a whole new world to the people of Turkmenistan; and the production of books, both original and in translation, has increased tremendously. I was told that in 1913 only 4 books with a total of 400 copies were published in Turkmenistan. In 1965, the number of books published came to 634 (of which 430 were in the Turkmen language) with 3,145,000 copies. When it is remembered that the population of Turkmenistan is only about 2 million, including infants and the aged, one can imagine how widespread the habit of reading has become.

I was privileged to spend an evening with the founder and doyen of Turkmen literature, Berdy Kerbabayev. He wrote the first novel, the first scenario and the first historical tragedy in the Turkmen language. His scintillating personality and effervescent humour, sometimes mellow and more often

puckish, made the evening perfectly delightful.

Another scholar whom I was happy to meet was Dr A. Smirnov. Though a doctor, his heart has been in literature—and in Sanskrit literature. He has performed the stupendous feat of translating the Mahabharata into Russian.

We visited a collective farm called Soviet Turkmenistan just outside Ashkhabad. It grew large quantities of vegetables, grain, grapes, melon, meat, wool and eggs. I met one of the inmates of the farm and went into her rooms and enjoyed her hospitality, including camel milk. Her rooms were small but cozy, fitted with electricity, gas, radio and running water and covered with carpets on the floor as well as the walls. Around her house was a plot of about a third of an acre on which she grew fruits and vegetables, which she was at liberty to sell as she liked. She kept a cow, a camel, 25 sheep and a large number of rabbits. When she was with child she had

maternity leave with pay for 56 days before, and 56 days after delivery. Her children went to school. There were four primary schools, three secondary schools, a crèche and a kindergarten on the farm. Fifteen children of the farm were studying at the university.

The collective farm contrasted strangely with the surrounding country. All around it was a desert. More than three-fourths of Turkmenistan is one vast desert, called Kara Kum.

Kara Kum means black sand. Black, not in colour, for its colour is bright yellow, but because of the terrors it held for man. Yet man has begun to assert his mastery over the desert. We drove out into the desert and, in the distance, we saw something resembling a blue ribbon on the surface of the golden sand. Approaching it, we found that it was a canal. This canal is being dug right across the desert to bring the waters of the Amu Darya river into the arid lands of South Turkmenistan. A canal of 800 km has been built to the vicinity of Ashkhabad; and it is to be extended for another 700 km to the Caspian Sea. Already a hundred thousand acres of virgin land have been irrigated. When the canal is completed, it will enable the farmers of Turkmenistan to reclaim more than a million hectares of land and increase the production of cotton fivefold. No wonder the Turkmens call it 'the Canal of Happiness'.

The construction of the Kara Kum canal is the subject of an impressive poem, 'The Eagle', by Anah Kovusov. It has been translated thus:

The dying stars still light the sky When, heedless of their fading glow, An eagle cleaves the clouds, his eye Fixed on the yellow sands below.

The desert's feared and hated lord.
He treats the world with cool disdain
And views, unmoved and all but bored,
The many wonders of the plain.
And yet his heart was filled with awe
The day when, swooping downward, he,

There in the arid desert, saw A man-made river flowing free,

At a meeting in the Turkmenistan University I referred to this poem and asked the poet if he would be good enough to recite it. He did so in Turkmenian and in Russian. On hearing it in Russian, Anujee discovered that the English translation did not do it full justice. What, according to the poet, filled the heart of the eagle with awe was the sight, for the first time, of its own reflection in water; and this is not brought out in the English translation. Anujee was profusely complimented by our kind hosts on her knowledge of Russian.

The day on which we arrived in Ashkhabad was one of rejoicing for the whole of Turkmenistan. On that day, 15 October, the stipulated target for cotton was realized in Turkmenistan earlier than in any other republic. It came to 500,000 tons. In 1924, the year when the Soviet Turkmen Republic was formed, the quantity of cotton cultivated came

to 45,000 tons.

Cotton has been aptly called white gold. Turkmenistan is not lacking in black gold either. Turkmenistan extracts more oil in a week than it did in a whole year before the Revolution. This state has also developed many other industries such as engineering, glass, spinning and weaving, machine building and the manufacture of electrical instruments.

What impressed me most was the progress made by Turkmenistan in education. Forty years ago, only 2 per cent of the people were literate. There was not a single Turkmen doctor, engineer or agronomist, let alone scientist or artist. Now illiteracy has been abolished, and an 8-year course of education has been made compulsory. There are dozens of technical institutes, a university and an academy of sciences.

We had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of Bibi Palvanova, Rector of the University. She is one of the most dynamic women I have come across and retains

what I, an oriental, may be permitted to call an oriental charm. Her life history is almost an epitome of the recent history of her people. Her father had been the owner of a small orchard when the Revolution broke out. He did not take kindly to collectivization and grumpily settled down in Ashkhabad with such earnings as he had made. Bibi Palvanova was married early and became a widow. Her father would not allow her to go to school or take up any work or remarry. All that was left for her was to sit at home and rue her fate. When her father died, a new life opened for her. She went to school and college and became the first woman graduate of Turkmenistan and is now Rector of the University of Ashkhabad. I visited the University where there was a great gathering of students and was charmed by the concert which they put up. When I saw the handsome Turkmen girls, acting, singing and dancing on the stage, I realized more than ever before how the Revolution had transformed the life of the people. But for the Revolution these girls would have been in purdah, but now there are women doctors, artists, civil servants, presidents of collective farms and directors of large industrial enterprises.

It was a special pleasure for me to see that a branch of the Soviet-Indian Cultural Society had been established in Ashkhabad, with Bibi Palvanova as the president. I shall never forget the kindness and hospitality which she and other friends extended to me in Turkmenistan. When Jawaharlal Nehru was leaving the USSR after spending three unforgettable weeks he said at the airport in Moscow that he was leaving a bit of his heart behind. I too have left a bit of my heart behind in Ashkhabad. To me, Askhabad will always

be, what it literally means, 'the City of Love'.

Index

INDEX

Adenauer, Dr Konrad, Visit to Moscow 783; 134, 140, 142, 146 Aeroflot, and Air India compared, 199 agriculture, Soviet, collective farms, 260-2, 331-3; effect of communism on, 304-5; 255-6, 319-20, 322, 331-4; finance for, 39; irrigation 205-6; in seven year

plan, 129-31; in sixth five year plan, 88-9; of virgin lands, 89, 325 air transport, 198-9, 204, 296-7

Algeria, peace talks in, 162 Alma Ata, 324-7 Angola, UN vote on, 162 Ansari, Masood, 133

Ararat, Mt, 208-9, archaeological remains,

259, 266, 275, 307 Arctic Circle, crossing of, 313 Armenia, Republic of, 298-308,

massacres in, 302 Armenian Church, 307-8 art, Soviet, 225-7, 232-3, 259, 306-7; Russian appreciation of Indian, 43, 46, 78

Ashkhabad, 330-34

Astrakhan, 248-51 Austria, gains independence 77,

93; border with Hungary, 99 Azerbaijan, Republic of, 246-7

Baghdad Pact, 71 Baikal lake, 290-93 Ballet, 180-4; ballet school, 184-7 Bakhchiserai, 265 Baku, 244-6 Bao Dai, 56-7 Bartok, Bela, 99 Belgian Congo, see Congo Beria, L. P., 38, 40

Berlin crisis, 123, 146-7 Bischoff, Norbert, 77 Britain, see Great Britain Black Sea, 219-20 Bolshoi Theatre, 180-4 'Bronze' Horseman, The', ballet,

230-31

Buddhism, in USSR, 321
Bulganin, N. A., 31, 63, 65-7; in
Belgrade, 77; at General Conference, 79; on German prisoners
of war, 81; in Great Britain, 94; in India, 70-2; replaced Malenkov, 76; resignation, 113; on Suez and Hungary, 103-4

Buryat-Mongol Republic, 292-6

Camp David, 138-40, 148

Castro, Fidel, 151

Catherine the Great, 17, 282, 304 caviare, processing of, 249-50 Central Committee, 84; dismissal of Kaganovich, Malenkov and Molotov, 112-3

Chamberlain, Neville, 108

Chekhov, Anton, 15, 281-7; house of, 268; sister of (Maria Pavlovna), 268-9

Chiang Kai-shek, 4, 14, 24, 57, 122-3

China, America's policy towards, 121-22; Chinese diplomats in Moscow, 201; diplomatic relations with Egypt, 93; on Indo-China, 53-4; industrialization in, 119, in Korea, 23-4, 35-6; in Quemoy, 122; rift with Russia, 116, 118-9, 128, 149, 153-6

Chita, 295-6 Chou En-lai, 35, 73-4, 128-9

338 INDEX

Christianity, in Armenia, 306; Communism compared with, 148; in Latvia, 316; beginnings in USSR, 258-9; worship at Zagorsk, 178-9

Churchill, Sir Winston, 6, 7, 10,

33-4, 94, 108, 180 Cold War, with China, 118-19; spread of, 23-5; after Stalin, 31-2; thawing of, 135-6

collectivization, 290, 331-2 co-existence, at 43rd Anniversary Congress, 153; Khrushchev's assurance of, 147; plea for, 74; Nehru on, 103-4; progress of, 73-5; at Twentieth Congress, 91-2

Communism, see Marxism Conferences, Colombo, 57; Four Power Conference, 67-8; Geneva Conference (on Korea and Indo-China) 55-7; on German Problem (at Geneva, July 1959), 133-5; San Francisco Conference, 5-11; summit conference, 78-9

Congo, the, 158, 160-61

Congress (Soviet Party), Nineteenth, 21-3; seven year plan at, 129-31; sixth five year plan at, 88-91; Twentieth, 84-92; Twenty-first, 128-31

consumer goods, lack of, 216; stepped up production of, 38-9 Cuba, 158; crisis in, 169-71

cultural exchanges, Indo-Soviet, 46-51, 63, 156-7

Czechoslovakia, 20, 95

Dien Bien Phu, 55-9, 163 dogmatism, in China, 118; after Hungary, 111-13; after Molotov, 116. at twentieth Congress, 124

Don, river, 242-3 Dostocysky, F. M., 88

Dulles, John Foster, on Berlin, 124, at cr death, 135 'I) tr nc' regarding the Far East, 122; the Mid to East, '09 'Du es plan for Sucz, 96-108; on Egyptian economy, 95; on Indo-China, 54-7; compared to Kennedy, 163; Khrushchev on, 148: legacy of, 161-2; on neutralism, 95; criticism of policy of, 23-4, 75-6, 93, 159; on Quemoy and Matsu, 122-23; on Stalin, 31-4

economy, Soviet, expansion under Communist rule, 89, 258, 262, 275, 286, 304-5, 319-20 324-5, 330-32

Eden, Sir Anthony, 6, 68-9, 78, 94, 97, 107-8

Soviet, 199, 206-7; education, compared to British and Tsarist, 304, 322, 331-3

Egypt, 93, 95-6, 102-3, 107 Ehrenburg, Ilya, 44, 46, 135

Eisenhower, Dwight D., on Cuba 158; on EDC, 76; at Geneva conference, 79-82; on Germany 140; in India, 142; compared to Khrushchev, 152; Khrushchev on, 139, 143, 147-8; meeting Khrushchev, 135; on Laos, 163; on neutralism, 95; on Sucz, 109; after U-2 incident, 145-6 electricity, in USSR, 278-80; hydro-

electric projects, 292, 305, 313-14,

etiquette, Russian, 196-7 European Defence Community, 24, 75, 259

'Farhad and Shirin' opera, 205 fisheries, S. at. 249 50, 291, 311-12 Five Principles, the, 87, 104-5 Formosa, (see Taiwan) Tountain of Richehiserai', ballet, 101, 183, 265, 267

France, at Co. es a conference, 1335, 140; rejection of EDC, 24; on Indo-China, 52-9; on Suez, 96-7, 102-3, 107; summit conference at Paris, 144-7; relations USSR. 91

Gagarin, Major Yuri, 165-8 Gaither, report, 115 Gandhi, Indira, 66, 204-6, 210-11, 322-3, 326

Gandhi, Mahatma, 13, 53, 87-8, 176, 187-9, 209

Gaulle, General Charles de, 136, 140-42, 145-6, 162

Georgia, Republic of, 210-20 Gerasimov, Alexander, 47-8

Germany, Churchill on, 94; Khrushchev in, 146-7, K on, 139-40; occupation of USSR by 223-4, 235-6, 286; cruelties in, 318; reunification of 123-4;

settlers in USSR, 282; tension in, 32; unification discussed, 80-81; USSR, relations with, 40-41, 93 Gomulka, Wladyslaw, 99-100, 102,

Jomulka, Wladysław, 99-106, 112

Gorki, Maxim, 42, 176, town named

after, 273

Great Britain, reaction to Egypt's arms deal with Czechoslovakia, 95, 107; foreign policy of, 12; on Indo-China, 53; Khrushchev and Bulganin in, 94; reaction to Khrushchev and Eisenhower meeting, 136, policy for Middle East, 119-21; on Suez, 46-7, 102-3; summit in Paris, 144-7; better relations with USSR, 94 Gromyko Andrei, 8, 103

Haile Selassie, 8, 131-3 Hammarskjoeld, Dag, 32, 151 Henderson, Loy, 110 Herriot, Edouard, 75 Ho Chi Minh, 52-8 hospitals, in USSR, 190-8, see also medicine Has gars, 93, crass on 1956), 95-7, revolution in, 96-106, 111

Ignatiev, Semyon, 38 India, connections with Astrakhan, 248-50; with Azerbaijan, 247; ter pie in Bixu, 24 × B Ignora in, 70-2; attitude to Congo, 161; to Cuba, 170; to Hungary, 104-6; independence of, 63, 66, 96; Indo-Soviet friendship 60, 63-5, 71; Khrushchev in, 70-2, 142, K on, 87; effort to secure peace in Korea, 26-7, 32, 35; languages of, 26; attitude to Laos, 164; Malenkov on, 41; Muslims in, 29; New Delhi compared to Moscow, 203; non-alignment policy of, 13, 26, 64-5, 70-71; non-violence in, 28, 64, 154; relations with Pakistan, 28; aid from Russia, 13, 63-4; Stalin on, 23, 27-8; Taj Mahal compared to Mtshkheta Cathedral 214, to St Sophia (Novogorod), 222-3; attitude to aid from USA, 71-2

Indo-China, discussed at Geneva conference, 55-6, 76; war in, 52-4 industry, Soviet, finance for, 38-9; heavy, 89, 129; progress in, 258, 262, 275, 286, 304-5, 319-20, 324-5; in seven year plan, 129-31

Iran, 40, 120, 143

Frag, revolution in, 119-21; on Sucz crisis, 107

Irkutsk 288-9

Iron Curtain, in Churchill's speech. 180; in Hungary, 96; relaxation of, in USSR, 37, 91-3

Israel, diplomatic relations with, 38, 40; at Suez (in 1956), 97, 103 Ivan the Terrible, 179, 274-5

Japan, Stalin on, 27; relations with USSR, 40 Jews in Russia, 17, 24, 38, 193, 261 Johnson, Lyndon, 59 Jordan, 110, 120-21

Kadar, Janos, 102, 105-6 Kaganovich, L. M., 68, 111-13, 128 Kalmuks, the 248-9 Karcas Lonnon R. p. 1812-196, 312-14 Kaur, Rajkumari Amrit, 187-8 Kazakhstan, 323 Karah, 271-77 Liniversity, 278 Kennan, George, 94 Kennedy, John F., 158, 164, 168 Khachaturyan, Aram, 45, 306 Khanum, Tamara, 48, 206

Khrushchev, Nikita, on American policy, 69, in Belgrade, 77-8: on Berlin, 124; at Camp David, 138-40; attacked by China, 118; on coexistence, 74, 153-5; on Cuba, 169; on disarmament, 152; on Dulles, 148; on Eisenhower, 143, 147-8; First Secretary to the Party, 31; at Fortieth Anniversary Parade, 1 14-5; receives Gagarin, 166-7; on German prisoners, 81-2; and on reunification of Germany, 80; on Hungarian revolution, 99; în India, 70-2, 142; on India, 87; on Iraqi revolution, 120; meeting with Kennedy arranged, 171; message to, 158-9; on Laos, 164; modifies Marxism, 84-7, 90, 149-50, 117; on moon flight, 138, 114; on Pasternak, 125; as Prime Minister, 113, 195; accuses Stalin, 111-13; on Suez, 96, 103; at Summit Conference (1960), 144-7; at Twentieth Congress, 84-87; Twenty-first Congress, 131; reports U-2, 142-44; in UK, 94; at UN, 151-2; in USA, 138-40; on virgin lands, 89, 325, 332; on Yugoslavia, 116-18

Kiev, 257-9 Kim II Sung, 34 Kirghistan, 321-23 Komsomol workers, 328 Korea, 23-4; 32-5, 55, 93, 164 Krupskaya, N. K., 176

Laos, 138, 158, 163-4 League of Nations, 7, 62, 108, 132 Lebanon, 106, 120-21 Lehman, Herbert, H., 122 Leila-Majnun, Opera, 246 Lenin, Nikola (V. I. Ulyanov), 15, 18-19, 21, 60-63, 84-6; changes since, 149-50, 233, 329; mausoleum of, 175-7 MacArthur, General Douglas, 35-6 Macmillan, Harold, 108, 120, 140-2, 145-6 Malenkov, G. M., replaced by Bulganin, 76-7; policy as Prime Minister, 40-41; dismissed from Presidium, 112, 128; succeeds Stalin, 31-32; tribute to India, 41 Mao Tse-tung, 113, 118 Marx, Karl, 22, 84-5, 91-2, 118, 150 Marxism, in China, 53; Communist manifesto, 152-6; goal of, 61-2; Khrushchev on, 117-8; modified, 84-7; Molotov on, 111-12 (see also dogmatism and revisionism) Mayakovsky, Vladunir, 42-4, 46, 90-91 medicine, Soviet, 192-3, 215, 264 Menon, V. K. Krishna, 13, 71, 105 Michoels (Jewish actor), 38 Mikoyan, A. I., 31, 68, 77, 86, 102, 108, 304-6 Moch, Jules, 75, 96-7 Moldavia, Republic of, 260-62 Molotov, V. M., 8, 10-11, 31, 55^c 73-5, 78, 111-12, 128 Mongols, 291 morals, Soviet, 62 mujiks, 15 Murmansk, 309-12

Nagy, Imre, 100, 102, 105; execution of, 297

music, Soviet, 45-6; affinity to

Muslims, in India, 29; in USSR,

Murville, Couve de, 133

Indian, 246-7

Mussolini, Benito, 8

246, 264-5

Nalbandiyan (artist), 48, 201, 306 Nasser, Gamal Abdel, 96, 107, 120, 132, 285

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 33, 77-8, 80, 94, 124, 162, 191

Nehru, Jawaharlal, on India's policy, 64-5; vision of India, 154; on Indo-China, 55; on Korea, 36; on Laos, 164; in London, 69-70; on bases in Pakistan, 50; present to Soviet children, 256-7; in USSR (in 1927 and 1955), 60-67; on war, 103-4; on Western policy, 67-8

Neutralism, 94-5, 102 m. Marian Nikitin, N., 20 Nixon, Richard, 143, 159 nuclear power, 9, 91-2, 159 'Nutcracker Suite', ballet, 186-7

Odessa, 262 oil, in USSR, 244-5; 333 Oppenheimer, Robert, 9

Pakistan, India's relations with, 28; Khrushchev on, 143-4; Stalin on, 26, 28; military aid from USA, 71, pact with USA, 49-50 Paléologue, Maurice, 15-19 Palvanova, Bibi, 333-4 Pandit, Mrs Vijayalakshmi, 13-14, 70 Paniushkin, Alexander, 4,7 Pasternak, Boris, 125-7 Pathet Lao, 163-4 Peter the Great, 231, 257, 304 Petrov, A., 4 Pham Van Dong, 73-4 Plan, Soviet, for Kazakhstan, 324; sixth five year, 88-91, seven year, 129-31 Pogodin, Nikolai, 89 Poland, support of China, 112-9;

Poland, Support of China, 112-9; de-Stalinization in, 98-9 Ponomarenko, P. K., 48, 206

Portugal, 14, 162

Powers, Francis, 143-4 (see also U-2) Prasad, Dr Rajendra, 327

Pravda', on China, 149-50; on Germany, 135; on Kennedy, 159; on Laos, 163; on literature, 44, 89-90; on Michoels, 38, on the Middle East, 121; on space travel, 114, 141, 165; on Yugoslavia, 117

Presidium, on Gagarin, 166; members at the Kremlin banquet, 73-5; dismissal of Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich, 112

Press, American press on Gagarin, 168-9; Soviet press on the Lunik, 137; on Pasternak, 125

prisons, Soviet, 61; fortress of Peter and Paul, 231; in Siberia, 294

Prokofiev, Sergei, 45
Protocol, Chief of, 175, in Russia and in Republican China, 14
purge, of Beria, 37-8; of doctors, 24-5; of Presidium members,

Pushkin, Alexander S., his oriental ancestry, 178; home of, 232; poems, The Bronze Horseman', 230-31; 'Poltava', 257; Tribute in Odessa, 263

Quemoy and Matsu, 122-3

Raab, Dr Julius, 77
Radhakrishnan, Dr S., 2
radio, Russian, 196-7
railways, Soviet, 282, 285-7, 293-5
Rakosi, Matyas, 99-100, 105
Rasputin, Grigori, 15-16
religion, m Russia, 61, 275-6
revisionism, China on, 116-18, 149;
in Hungary, 111-13; at Twentieth
Congress, 128
revolution, anniversaries of, 114-16,
152, 218; changes since, 275-6;
in Hungary, 98-106; in Iraq,
119-21

Rhee, Dr Syngman, 34, 36-7, 57, 82, 93 Richelieu, Duke of, 262-3 Riga, 315-20 Romeo and Juliet, ballet, 181-2 Roosevelt, F. D., 6-8 Ruskin, John, 14 Ryumin, Mikhail, 38

Saburov, M. Z., 73 Sainteny, Jean, 53 Samarkand, 207 sanatoria, Soviet, 215-18, 263-4, 270, 318 SEATO, 71, 76, 191 Shah of Iran, 330 Shepilov, D. T., 101, 104 Sholokhov, Mikhail, 243 Shvernik, President, 14, 175 Siberia, 285-97, political prisons in, 294; natural resources in, 297 Sihanouk, Prince of Cambodia, 132 Sinkiang, 180, 329 Sochi, 214-20 Soekarno, President, 132 South Africa, 13-14, 162 space travel, see 'sputniks'

'Lunik' sputniks, 113-15, 161, 165-9 spying, 24, 37, 105, 142-4 (see also U-2)

and

Stalin, Joseph, V., author's interview with, 25-9; birthplace of, 212; on coexistence, 91; Dulles on, 32; Economic Problems of Socialism in USSR', 86-7; reaction against, in Hungary, 98-100; illness and death, 29-30; attitude to India, 26; on defence of India, 28; on Indo - Pakistan relations, 28; Jewish doctors, 24-5; on Japan, 27; at Nineteenth Congress, 21-23; changes in policy after death, 33-4; on San Francisco Conference, 7-8; on secularism, 28-9; on Taiwan, 27; at Twentieth Congress, 86-7 Stalinabad, 328

Stalingrad, 234-37, 282; battle of, 234-7

Stevenson, Adlai, 162 Suez, 11, 93, 95-7, 102-3, 107-8 Summit Conference, break-up of 144-7; on Germany, 140; on Indo-China, 73 'Swan Lake' ballet, 182-3 Syria, 96, 109-10

Tagore, Rabindranath, 171 Taiwan (Formosa), 23-4, 27, 122-3 Tajikstan, 327-29 Tannhauser, Opera, 319-20 Tartars, 264, 273, 319 Tashkent, 204-7 Tbilisi, 210 Tchaikovsky, 182, 264 Thompson, Llewellyn, 131,159, 169 Tito, Marshal, 78, 116, 118, 146 Tiutchev, F. I., 17 Tolstoy, Leo, 14; home of, 187-90 Touré, Sekou, 132, 151 town planning, in Moscow, 200-2 Truman, Harry, 9, 36 Tsars, 231-2, 285, 288-9 Turgenev, Ivan S., home of, 253-5 Turkey, warned by Khrushchev, 144; Russian boundary claims renounced, 39; as ally of USA, 110, 120, Turkmenistan, 329-34

Ulanova, Galina, 181-3, 301 United Nations, resolution on Angola, 162-3; on China, 24; on Congo, 160-62; appointment of Hammarskjold, 32; Hungary's attitude to, 105-6; Indian delegation to, 13-14; resolution on Jordan and Lebanon, 121; Khrushchev at General Assembly, 138-9, 151-2; on Korea and Indo-China, 55; Korean policies of, 35-6; policy on South Africa, 13-14, 162; on Suez, 97; at Yalta, conception of, 269 U-2 incident, the, 142-4, 151, 153, 159

U. S. A., Cuba policy of, 158, 169-70; foreign policies of, 59, 67-9; German policy of, 133-5, e123-4; Indo-China policy of, 52-6, 58; election of Kennedy, 158; Khrushchev's visit to, 138-40; on Korea, 35-7; policy in Middle East and Far East, 119-22; missile strength of, 80; attitude to neutralism, 95, 163-4; aid to Pakistan, 49-50, 71; in space race, 113-15, 137, 168-9; spying by, 142-4, policy on Suez, 97, 103, 109; on Taiwan, 27; attitude to USSR, 31, 62; aid to Yugoslavia, 117

Viet Minh, 52, 58 Vietnam, 53 virgin lands, development of, 89, 325, 332 Volga-Don canal, 238, 243, 282 Volga-German Republic, 281-2 Volga, river, 238, 273-84 Voroshilov, Kliment, 31, 131, 142 Vyshinksky, Andrei, 32-3, 184-5

'White Nights', 227-29 Winter in Russia, 177-8, 184 women, position of, in USSR, 326, 328-9, 333-4

Yalta, 268-70; conference at, 269 Yerevan, 298-300 Yugoslavia, relations with China, 118; neutrality of, 77; de-Stalinization in 93, 111; relations with USSR, 40, 116-17

Zagorsk, 177-9 Zale (sculptor), 317-19 Zhdanov A. A., 43, 45, 176 Zhukov, Marshall G., 31, 79, 88 Zorin, V. A., 104-5 Published to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution, this volume contains a combined version of two of K. P. S. Menon's previous works about the Soviet Union.

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